GOING DOWNRIVER
ON THE LEGO IDEAS STEAMBOAT

ALSO INSIDE: WHY ARE SOME BUILD TECHNIQUES ILLEGAL?

Blocks

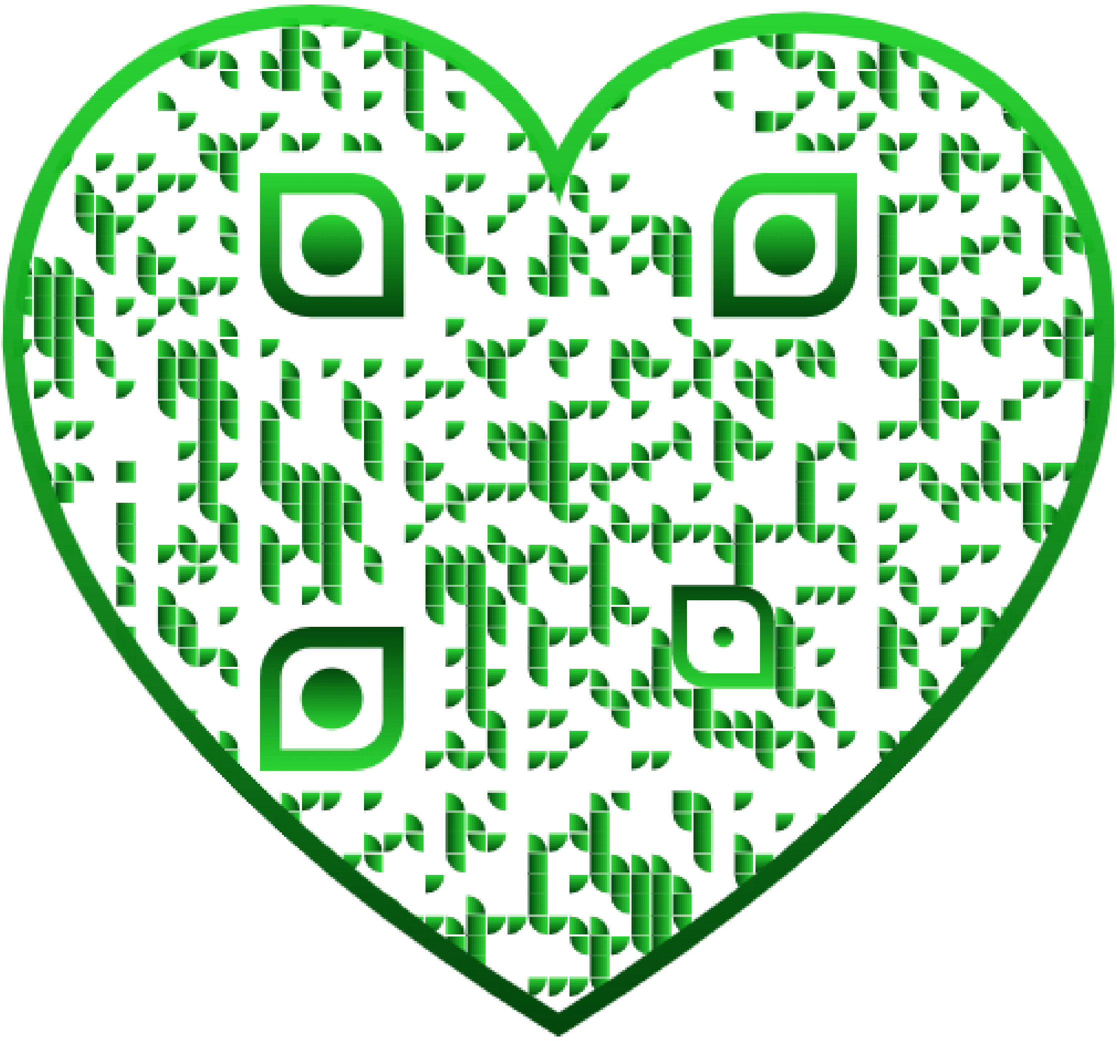
BUILDING, COLLECTING & CU R LEGO

WIN!
MASSIVE
STAR WARS
JANGO FETT
STARSHIP
UCS SET

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

BRINGING A DISNEY CLASSIC TO THE BRICK

ISSUE 128 // £6.99
9 772055 605059 28



bricktraders
57
bricktraders
www.bricktraders.co.uk
LEGO® BRICKS SETS AND FIGURES
BUY SELL TRADE CREATE
OPEN
CLOSED

NEW AND **PRE-LOVED**

LEGO® BRICKS, SETS & MINIFIGURES

bricktraders

Your independent store in Hertfordshire UK

- **Specialists in retired sets**
- **100s of minifigures**
- **Brick'n'mix**
- **Make a minifig**
- **Polybag sets**

LEGO CREATOR
LEGO TECHNIC
LEGO TECHNIC
BRAND NEW
BRAND NEW
BRAND NEW
STAR WARS
LEGO CREATOR
STAR WARS
DC COMICS SUPER HEROES
STAR WARS

bricktraders

Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm
57 Catherine Street, St Albans AL3 5BN

www.bricktraders.co.uk • 07974 304979

LEGO® is a trademark of the LEGO Group of companies which does not sponsor, authorize or endorse Bricktraders

THIS MONTH

Certain Disney films last – you could even say they become tales as old as time. From each era, different animated features become classics that are embraced by every generation, whether they discover them at the cinema, on VHS, on DVD or via streaming. Beauty and the Beast has that staying power, capturing the hearts of audiences with a mix of romance, adventure and humour.

While it has been represented in LEGO Disney before, the film is honoured in showstopping fashion in 43263 Beauty and the Beast Castle. This one is clearly for the nostalgic adults who grew up with the movie. Senior Designer Ryan Van Woerkom provides fascinating insight into how the LEGO design team approach these projects as he explains the process he went through when recreating the imposing castle.

Senior Model Designer Marina Stampoli was not challenged to build a fantastical castle based on reference, instead she had to take the concept of a steamboat and distil everything that is recognisable about those vehicles into a single model. In a second exclusive interview this month, she discusses the balance she had to find between technical and aesthetic considerations when crafting the vessel.

Not every set is a big adult model of course – LEGO City delivered a tiger in 60426 Jungle Explorer Off-Road Truck. There's not much jungle in that set though, so Blocks goes about remedying that in this issue's epic build project. Step by step instructions demonstrate how you can build natural features to create an overgrown environment.

Beware of illegal connections through – after all, you don't want to be arrested by a LEGO System enforcement officer. Will you really be banned from buying more bricks though if you break out of sanctioned ways of building? Our deep dive into the topic will illuminate what illegal connections are, why they sort of matter to fan builders but don't really and how they help the LEGO Group create satisfying build experiences.

Staying with satisfying builds, there's nothing better than completing something and popping it on the shelf. If you want a small dose of model making that won't take over your dining table for six months, then follow the instructions for one of our Quick Builds – you can put together a mini version of the Shire from The Lord of the Rings, a modern version of 6585 Hang-Glider from 1998 or a bookshelf friendly depiction of the Beast's castle.

Leg godt!

Graham

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
Editor
graham@blocksmag.com

GOING DOWNRIVER ON THE LEGO IDEAS STEAMBOAT
ALSO INSIDE: WHY ARE SOME BUILD TECHNIQUES ILLEGAL?
Blocks
BUILDING, COLLECTING & C… LEGO
WIN!
MASSIVE STAR WARS JANGO FETT STARSHIP UCS SET
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
BRINGING A DISNEY CLASSIC TO THE BRICK

SUBSCRIBE TO BLOCKS

Get Blocks early every month with a great value subscription package. You'll save money, be entered into a new prize draw every month and get access to our full digital archive. Browse the different options at blocksmag.com.

72

What we've been building...

Daniel is back in Middle-earth with 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire. Last month you heard from the designers behind the model, but this month you can read our verdict. Do you need a party invite or should you make your excuses?

It is time to switch this set out for something more summer focused, but Kat has enjoyed 40709 Spring Animal Playground as part of her spring décor. The charming build has a chick and a squirrel enjoying some outdoor playtime.

When Graham finally got around to seeing The Brutalist at Picturehouse, he was inspired to build something himself during the interval – and fortunately, there was a LEGO City build station right there in the foyer for him to get stuck into.

Motorsport fan Dave got to grips with 42207 Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car, then Phil took the set into the studio to shoot some fun, dynamic angles. Find out how it measures up against the other Formula 1 models in this month's Reviews section.

CONTENTS

// THE SORT

06 Success for the LEGO Group
08 What's new and next
09 New Star Wars Andor sets
10 Brick Central
12 Contest of the Month
14 Gaming Download
15 Ideas Latest
16 Screen Time
17 LEGO Pokémon is a go
18 The Brick Debate
20 What's new at BrickLink
21 Better than gold?
22 The Lost Elements
23 In other news...
24 Latest from LEGO House
26 Secrets we've spotted
27 Five things we've learned
28 Top Ten

71

78

88

82

66

85

74

// FEATURES

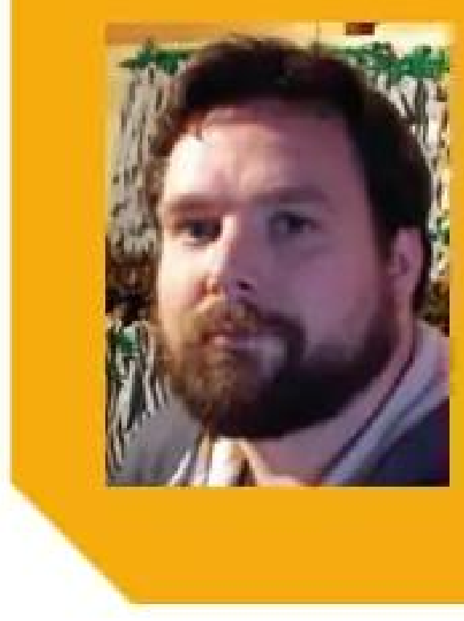
34 An Enchanted Castle
Ryan Van Woerkom recalls tapping into his nostalgia to enchant LEGO elements until they came together as a detailed, display-worthy castle inspired by Beauty and the Beast.

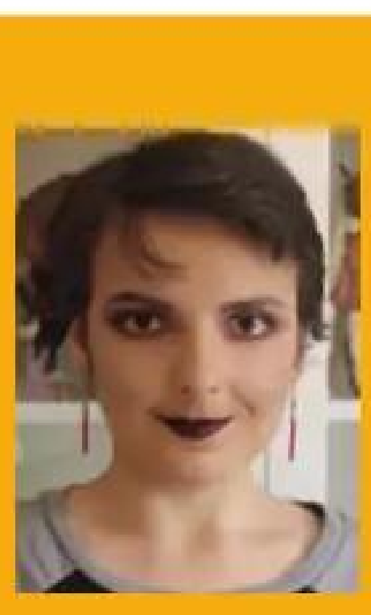
42 Why are some LEGO connections illegal?
Blocks breaks down exactly where the term 'illegal techniques' comes from and delves into why certain ways of connecting bricks are possible… but definitely not recommended.

50 All aboard the River Steamboat
Marina Stampoli and Jordan Scott welcome passengers aboard 21356 River Steamboat and discuss the challenges they encountered as they recreated the iconic ship in the brick.

Editor
GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
A LEGO expert who can't remember life without the brick, Graham loves using that knowledge to bring Blocks to readers every single month.

Build Expert & Historian
DANIEL KONSTANSKI
Both a builder and a collector, Daniel has extensively researched the LEGO Group's history, making him an unrivalled fount of knowledge.


Build Specialist
SIMON PICKARD
If there's a way to put two bricks together, Simon knows it. He's an experienced builder who is always discovering new techniques.

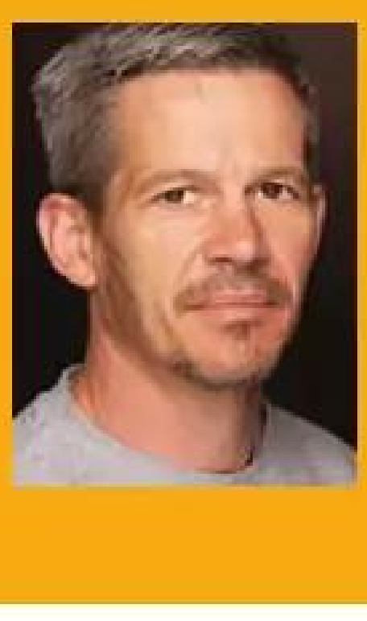

Features Writer
KAT REES-JAUKE
This life-long brick fan is always ready to dig deep into the latest sets to find out how they were conceptualised, designed and developed.

Features Writer
ANTHONY WALKER-COOK
With a passion for fantasy sets but a penchant for any box that features the LEGO logo, Anthony covers every aspect of the brick experience.

Reviews Writer
DAVE CARTLIDGE
Whether it's from Marvel Super Heroes, Friends, Technic or any other theme, Dave has the LEGO build know-how to assess the latest sets.

Build Curator
GENEVA DURAND
A 2x2 pillar of the community, Geneva is a respected member of the online creative LEGO scene with an expert eye for the best builds out there.

News Writer
RYAN EVERLETH
This LEGO aficionado has eclectic tastes, including Star Wars, Ideas and The Lord of the Rings. He always has a take on the latest news.


Photographer
PHIL WRIGHTON
Models never look better than when this prize-winning LEGO photographer has worked his magic to produce beautiful Blocks covers.

CONTENTS

// BUILDS

34 An Enchanted Castle
Capture the magic of a classic Disney movie and build an enchanted castle in miniature. Don't forget to sing the songs as you build.

48 Bag End
Inspired by the LEGO Group's recent return to Hobbiton, build a miniature version of Bilbo Baggin's cosy abode.

92 Deeper Jungle
Traverse the underbrush and go deep into the jungle to discover the tiger in its natural habitat – it's probably best to use a long lens.

100 Microscale
The smallest building style requires you to look at elements differently, as these micro masterpieces demonstrate.

102 Technique Spotlight
Whether you're a merchant looking for a deal or an architect looking for round tower inspiration, this is the place to be.

34

92

50

42

80

// REVIEWS

60 75409 Jango Fett's Starship
64 75411 Darth Maul Mech;
75400 Plo Koon's Jedi Starfighter Microfighter
65 75399 Rebel U-wing Starfighter
66 72033 Donkey Kong & DK Jumbo
67 72034 Baby Mario vs. Baby Luigi
68 72036 Mario Kart – Baby Peach & Grand Prix
70 77055 Able Sisters Clothing Shop;
43266 Cinderella's Dress
71 43262 Maleficent's & Cruella De Vil's Dresses
74 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire
78 76447 Hogwarts Castle: Flying Lessons
80 76441 Hogwarts Castle: Dueling Club;
76442 Hogwarts Castle: Charms Class
81 76443 Harry & Hagrid's Motorcycle Ride
82 76453 Malfoy Manor
84 42203 Tipping Dump Truck
85 42204 Fast & Furious Toyota Supra Mk4
86 42206 Oracle Red Bull Racing RB20 F1 Car
88 42207 Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car
90 Reviews round-up

60

// RETRO

104 In 1985...
Push-along trains, an anniversary for the System and a sprawling airport were some of the brick highlights in 1985.

106 Time Cruising
The first ever LEGO video game was only available in Japan on an obscure console.

107 VIntage print ad
This 1991 ad shows the Black Knights in Castle .

108 Modern 6585 Hang-Glider
Are things extreme enough for you? Build this hang glider and take your minifigures to the sky.

110 From the Vault
Just a short walk from the LEGO Group's headquarters, children could wander the streets of an actual manifestation of Fabuland.

Cover image: Phil Wrighton

Contributors
Matt Chiles, Will Tachick, Chris Wharfe

Thanks to...
The LEGO Group, featured builders, John Longbottom, Mischief PR, Sophie Mitchell, Jordan Paxton, Jordan Scott, Sara Skahill, Marina Stampoli, Signe Wiese Bundsbæk, Ryan Van Woerkom, Marco Zanconi

Advertising Manager
Colin Smithson

Art Editor
Lorna Mansford, Hype Creative

Publisher
Tom Saunders
tom@silverbackpublishing.rocks
+447841 412199

Independence
Blocks is published by Silverback Publishing Ltd for fans and enthusiasts of LEGO. LEGO, the LEGO logo, the brick and knob configurations, and the minifigure are trademarks of the LEGO Group, which does not sponsor, authorise or endorse Blocks magazine.

Distribution
If you have trouble finding Blocks please call +447841 412199 or email subs@silverbackpublishing.rocks.

While every effort is made in compiling Blocks, the publishers cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any storage or retrieval system, without the consent of the publisher.

SILVERBACK
PUBLISHING

OUTPERFORMING THE COMPETITION

The LEGO Group reports a triumphant 2024, with sales outperforming the toy industry

Aside from a minor blip in 2017 (well, as minor as anything involving hundreds of millions of pounds can be), the last 20 years has seen the LEGO Group on a seemingly neverendingly upwards trajectory. Even a global pandemic couldn't slow down the company's growth — quite the opposite, in fact. The LEGO Group's latest annual financial report, covering 2024, details continued record-breaking growth.

Revenue was up 13% compared to 2023, rising to DKK 74.3 billion (approx. £8.4 billion). Certainly an impressive increase, though even more so when compared to DKK 43.7 billion (approx. £4.9 billion) in revenue in 2019. The strong performance was credited to high demand in the Americas, Europe and Middle East markets.

Consumer sales also increased by 12% across the board, compared to a 1% decrease in the toy market overall. This was possible in part thanks to a record 840 products on shelves in 2024, spoiling fans for choice. City, Star Wars and Icons were among the best-selling themes, with the ever-expanding Botanicals also credited as a top performer.

The LEGO Group's revenue translated to DKK 18.7 billion (approx. £10 billion) in operating profit, a 10% increase compared to 2023. The slightly smaller profit growth (when compared to revenue) is by design — a significant portion of revenue is being directed towards new factories, sustainable materials and other initiatives to futureproof the company.

"2024 was an exceptional year for the LEGO Group and we are very pleased with our strong performance. We achieved record top- and bottom-line results even as we accelerated spending on strategic priorities, including a significant increase in the purchases of sustainable raw materials," said Niels B. Christiansen, CEO of the LEGO Group. "We are encouraged by these strong results as they will allow us to continue to reach more children with LEGO play experiences now and in the future."

Sustainability efforts included increasing solar capacity in China, the Czech Republic and Denmark by 43%, as well as installing geothermal energy in Hungary. The LEGO Group also plans to continue making products more sustainable — half of purchased materials to make elements were produced with sustainable sources in 2024.

Additionally, new facilities have started springing up around the globe as part of the company's initiatives to expand its manufacturing capacity and global supply chain. This includes two distribution centres in Belgium and Vietnam, as well as a new US factory in Virigina that is set to open in 2027.

Improving its internal and consumer facing technological capabilities has been another multi-year project for the LEGO Group; demand forecasting models saw improvements with machine learning and LEGO Stores received internet connectivity boosts to better the in-store experience. These are some of the most recent steps in a continuing plan to modernise foundational tech systems in all corners of the company.

The different initiatives came together for a record-breaking 2024 for the LEGO Group and the success is showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon, with 2025 already having introduced many new partnerships, new sets and new experiences.

RYAN EVERLETH

The LEGO Group CEO Niels B. Christiansen.

Below: As profits have increased, the LEGO Group has invested in both physical and digital infrastructure.

WHAT'S NEW & NEXT

POWERED BY... BRICKSET

COMING SOON

1 77078 Mecha Team Leader
Theme: *Fortnite*
Pieces: *2,503*
Price: *£209.99, $249.99, €229.99*

2 76326 Iron Spider-Man Bust
Theme: *Marvel*
Pieces: *379*
Price: *£54.99, $59.99, €59.99*

77238 Lamborghini Revuelto & Huracán STO
Theme: *Speed Champions*
Pieces: *607*
Price: *£44.99, $49.99, €49.99*

43273 Disney Advent Calendar
Theme: *Disney*
Pieces: *231*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

75418 Star Wars Advent Calendar
Theme: *Star Wars*
Pieces: *263*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

21280 Minecraft Advent Calendar
Theme: *Minecraft*
Pieces: *300*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

76456 Harry Potter Advent Calendar
Theme: *Harry Potter*
Pieces: *278*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

1

2

OUT NOW

77075 Peely & Sparkplug's Camp
Theme: *Fortnite*
Pieces: *250*
Price:*£17.99, $22.99, €19.99*

77076 Durrr Burger Restaurant
Theme: *Fortnite*
Pieces: *546*
Price:*£54.99, $64.99, €59.99*

77077 Klombo
Theme: *Fortnite*
Pieces: *1,084*
Price:*£89.99, $109.99, €99.99*

3 31216 Keith Haring – Dancing Figures
Theme: *Art*
Pieces: *1,773*
Price:*£104.99, $119.99, €119.99*

31217 Tiger
Theme: *Art*
Pieces: *744*
Price:*£54.99, $64.99, €59.99*

4 10348 Japanese Maple Tree
Theme: *Botanicals*
Pieces: *474*
Price:*£54.99, $59.99, €59.99*

76327 Iron Man MK4 Bust
Theme: *Marvel*
Pieces: *436*
Price: *£54.99, $59.99, €59.99*

3

4

RETIRING SOON

10305 Lion Knights' Castle
Theme: *Icons*
Pieces: *4,514*
Price: *£344.99, $399.99, €399.99*

10315 Tranquil Garden
Theme: *Icons*
Pieces: *1,363*
Price: *£94.99, $109.99, €104.99*

10316 The Lord of the Rings: Rivendell
Theme: *Icons*
Pieces: *6,167*
Price: *£429.99, $499.99, €499.99*

10391 Over the Moon with Pharrell Williams
Theme: *Icons*
Pieces: *966*
Price: *£94.99, $109.99, €109.99*

75978 Diagon Alley
Theme: *Harry Potter*
Pieces: *5,544*
Price: *£389.99, $449.99, €449.99*

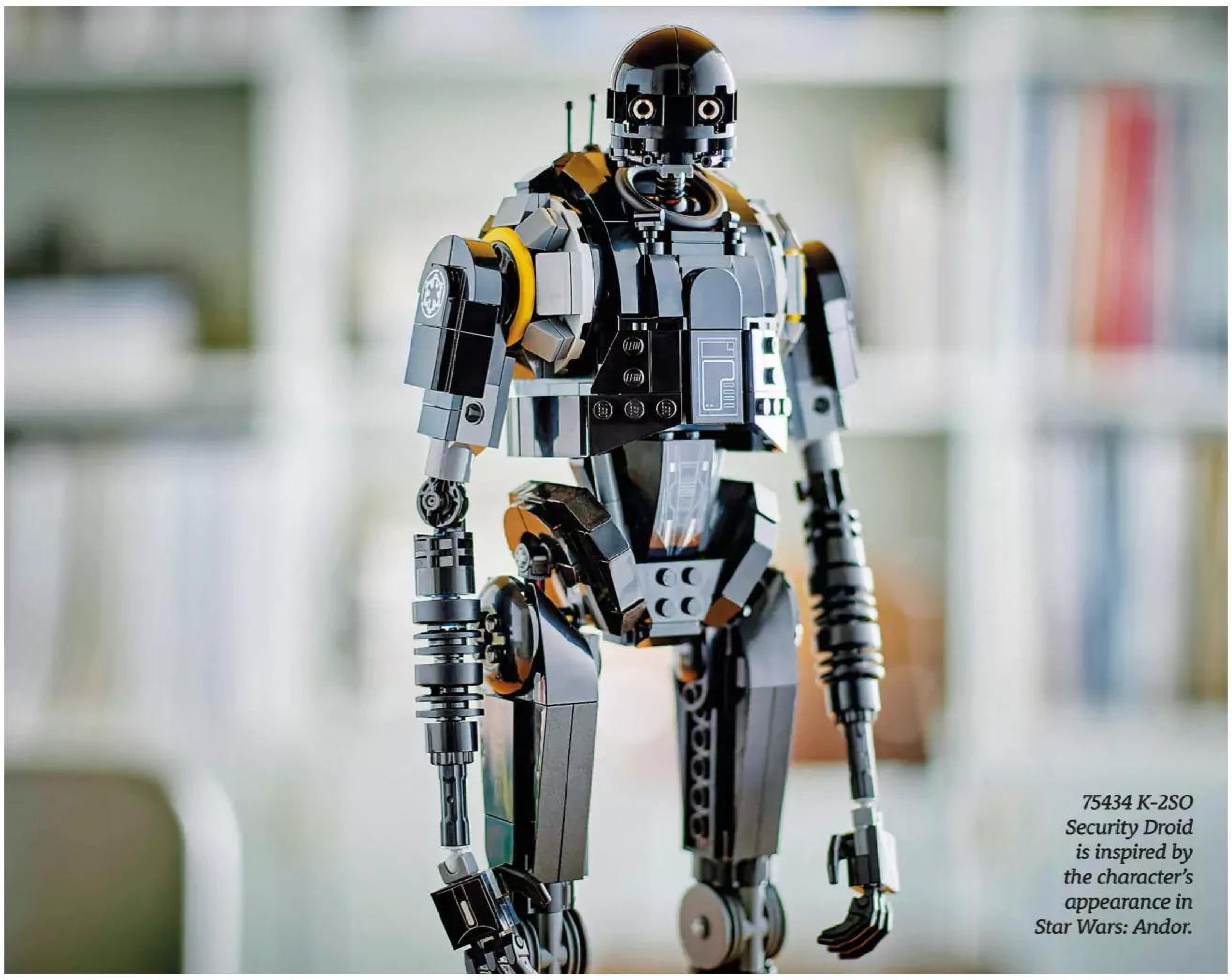
76391 Hogwarts Icons
Theme: *Harry Potter*
Pieces: *3,010*
Price: *£259.99, $299.99, €299.99*

10297 Boutique Hotel
Theme: *Icons*
Pieces: *3,066*
Price: *£199.99, $229.99, €229.99*

All information is correct at the time of going to print. Prices and retirement dates may change.

NEW STAR WARS SETS COVER ANDOR AND MORE

K-2SO and the U-wing are back in the brick as LEGO Star Wars takes inspiration from across the sprawling saga



75434 K-2SO Security Droid is inspired by the character's appearance in Star Wars: Andor.

Among the many models revealed and released around Star Wars Celebration Japan and May the Fourth, two tie-in sets for Star Wars: Andor show some love for a series that hasn't had many LEGO offerings so far. With the second and final season recently having streamed on Disney+, the new builds are appropriate.

75434 K-2SO Security Droid is the larger of the two, clocking in at 845 pieces and standing at a formidable 41cm (16in) tall. Built at a similar size as other large statue sets, K-2SO has three points of articulation for his arms, though his legs are static to ensure the stability of the model.

The set includes a plain stand to display the wise-talking droid on, as well as the usual plaque with accompanying minifigure. Pre-orders for the set are currently open, with release scheduled for August 1.

Fortunately, fans have another to keep them occupied in the meantime — 75399 Rebel U-Wing Starfighter, which released on May 1. Alongside the same K2 minifigure, it includes a new version of Cassian, the first ever Dedra Meero and an ISB Tactical Agent rounding things out. The U-Wing itself is 594 pieces, so downscaled from the 2016 version in a trend that has been common with recent starfighters. It looks to be an accurate model, though the troop-carrying capabilities are likely to be limited at this size.

Beyond Andor, 75407 Brick-Built Star Wars Logo is one of the more eye-catching releases, if only for its unique place in the theme. It follows in the footsteps of 76313 MARVEL Logo & Minifigures, albeit without the minifigures and functionality – but that does mean the price is significantly lower.

Naturally, 75409 Jango Fett's Firespray-Class Starship was the main attraction for the big Star Wars shopping event, with extra freebies this year including an exclusive keychain, an exclusive coin, an exclusive print and 40765 Kamino Training Facility.

RYAN EVERLETH

Far left: 75399 Rebel U-Wing Starfighter is the first minifigure scale version of the ship for nine years.

Left: 75407 Brick-Built Star Wars Logo is a 700-piece display model.

Graham's take

"I was struck by just how diverse and fresh the 2025 product range feels."

There was a point in the 2010s when it felt like LEGO Star Wars was retreading a lot of old ground. With no new stories outside of The Clone Wars, the theme focused on reimagined versions of beloved vehicles like X-wings and TIE Fighters.

That's not necessarily a bad thing – after all, newcomers to the brick need the icons. But when the Ultimate Collector Series (UCS) started to regularly repeat starfighters, it was a tough time to be a long-term collector.

When looking around the booth at Star Wars Celebration Japan, the 2025 product range felt fresh and diverse. 75409 Jango Fett's Starship is another new-to-UCS vehicle that fans have been waiting 23 years for. The character also gets some love in 75408 Jango Fett Helmet.

75407 Brick-Built Star Wars Logo is one of those sets that can only be offered now the theme is at a mature stage; it would have been very gimmicky back in 1999, but in 2025 it's easy to see how it can sit at the centre of a pleasing display.

More droids are getting bricked too, with the cantankerous bot from Ahsoka arriving in 75416 Chopper (C1-10P).

Then 75406 Kylo Ren's Command Shuttle continues the Starship Collection, showing some love to the sequel trilogy – and all of this is before even considering minifigure scale sets. LEGO Star Wars feels full of creative potential thanks to this breadth of offering, both in terms of different styles of model and in terms of covering different points in the saga.

Unfortunately though, LEGO Star Wars is also tapping into collector behaviour by offering more extra short run collectibles than ever for the May the Fourth promotional period – one or two gift with purchase/Insider items is fine... five is too many. By offering too many extra trinkets and inducing anxiety, there's the risk that fans will become frustrated and lose interest.

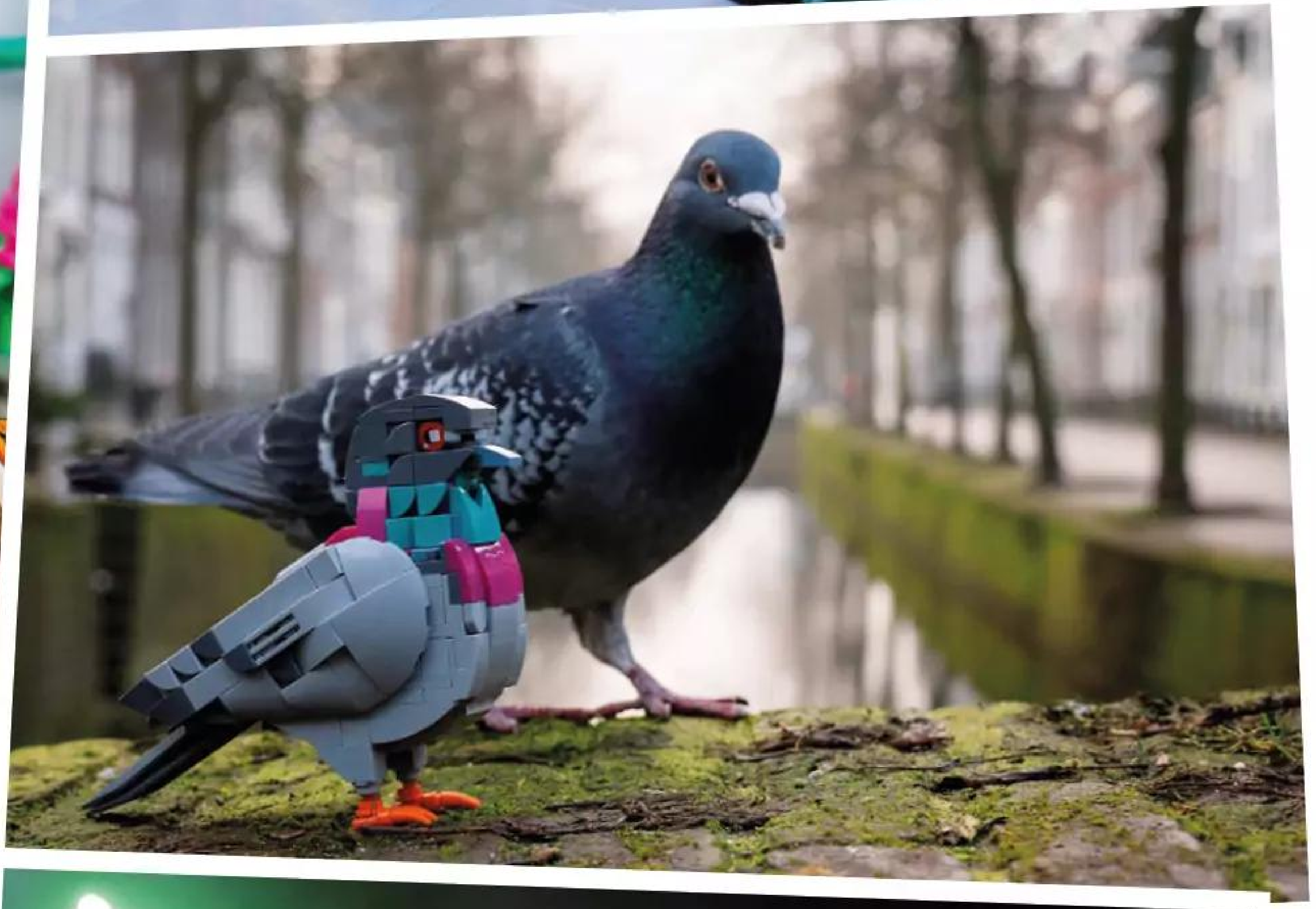
Where things really matter though is in the core sets and LEGO Star Wars seems more confident than ever. If the design team keeps things this interesting, then we're all going to be collecting for another 25 years.

Brick CENTRAL

Get involved

BrickCentral is an online community of photographers who take creative photos of LEGO models and minifigures. We've always got some fun activities for LEGO fans to do like photography themes, contests, tips and community projects. Our Discord, Instagram and Tumblr communities are home to thousands of members from around the world who want to share and discover LEGO photography.

Website: brickcentral.net
Instagram: *@brickcentral*
Tumblr: *@brickcentral*
Discord: *discord.gg/HwkZFH5*



Clockwise from top left: *@bricktoygrapher, @monsieur.kek @skabram, @startrevlegos, @toy.story.yana, @verolegoland*

BRICKBIN.CO.UK

whatnot

JOIN US **LIVE** ON **WHATNOT** FOR LEGO®
AUCTIONS STARTING FROM **JUST £1**

A LUCKY BUYER WON THIS!

SOLD FOR £10 EACH ON FLASH SALE!

AUCTIONED STARTING AT £1!

SCAN FOR **£10**
FREE CREDIT

WHATNOT.COM/INVITE/THEBRICKBIN

FIND US ONLINE

@thebrickbin

@thebrickbin

/thebrickbin

brickbin.co.uk

LEGO® is a trademark of the LEGO Group of companies which does not sponsor, authorise or endorse Brick Bin.

Contest of the Month

Get involved

Website: *flickr.com/groups/1841195@N22*

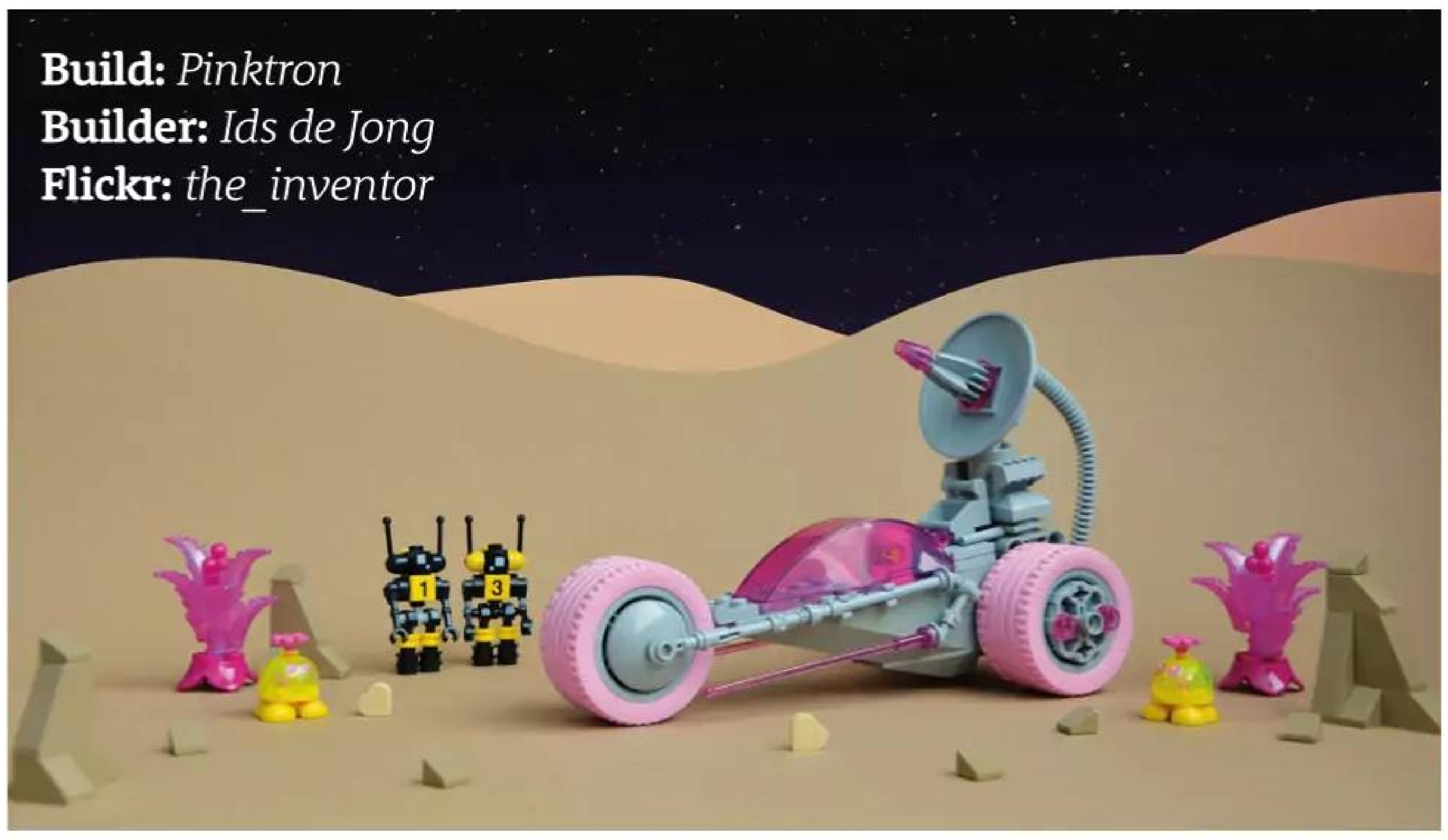
FEBROVERY

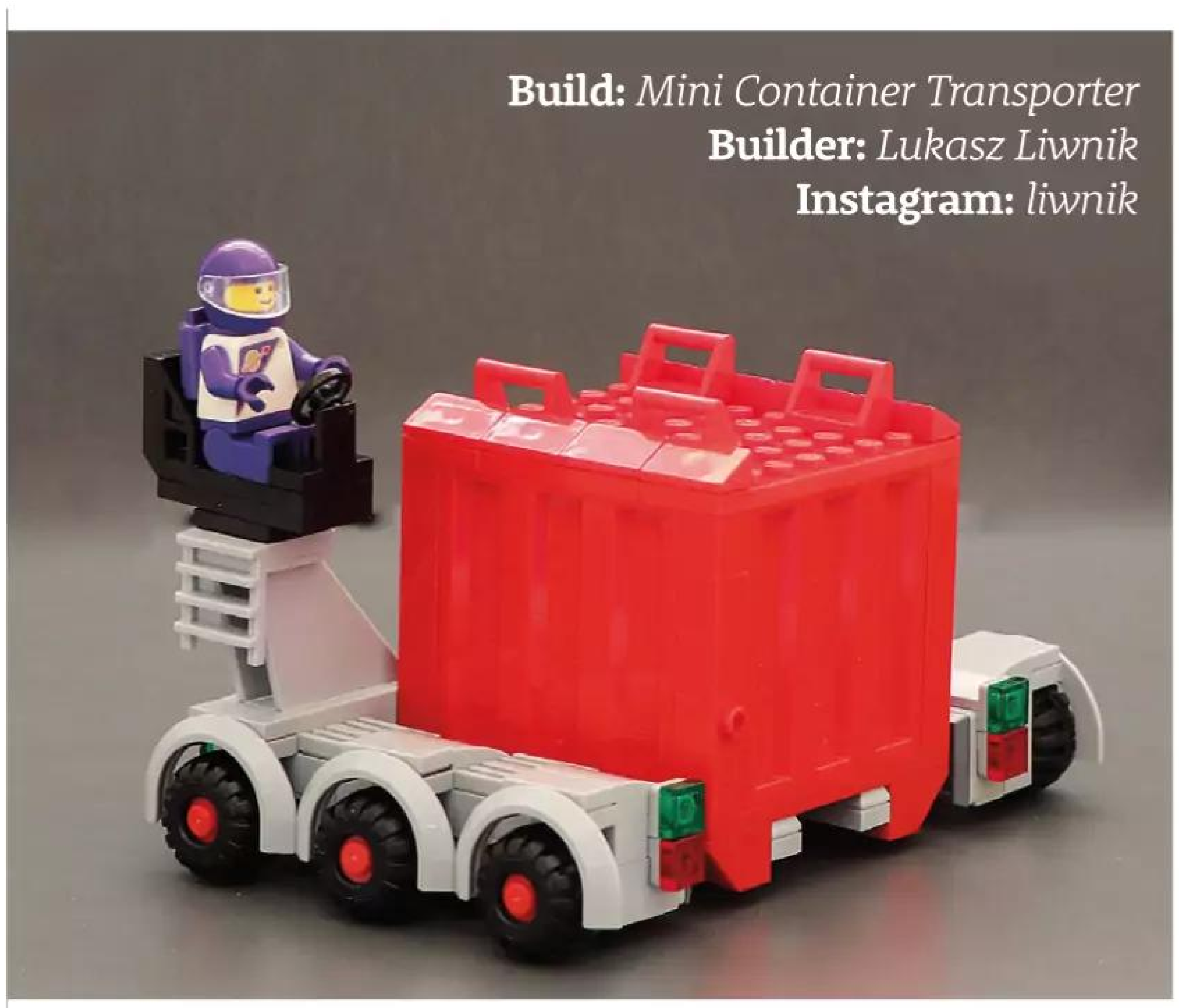
Every February, these builders go for a roll through the galaxy with creative and colourful rovers

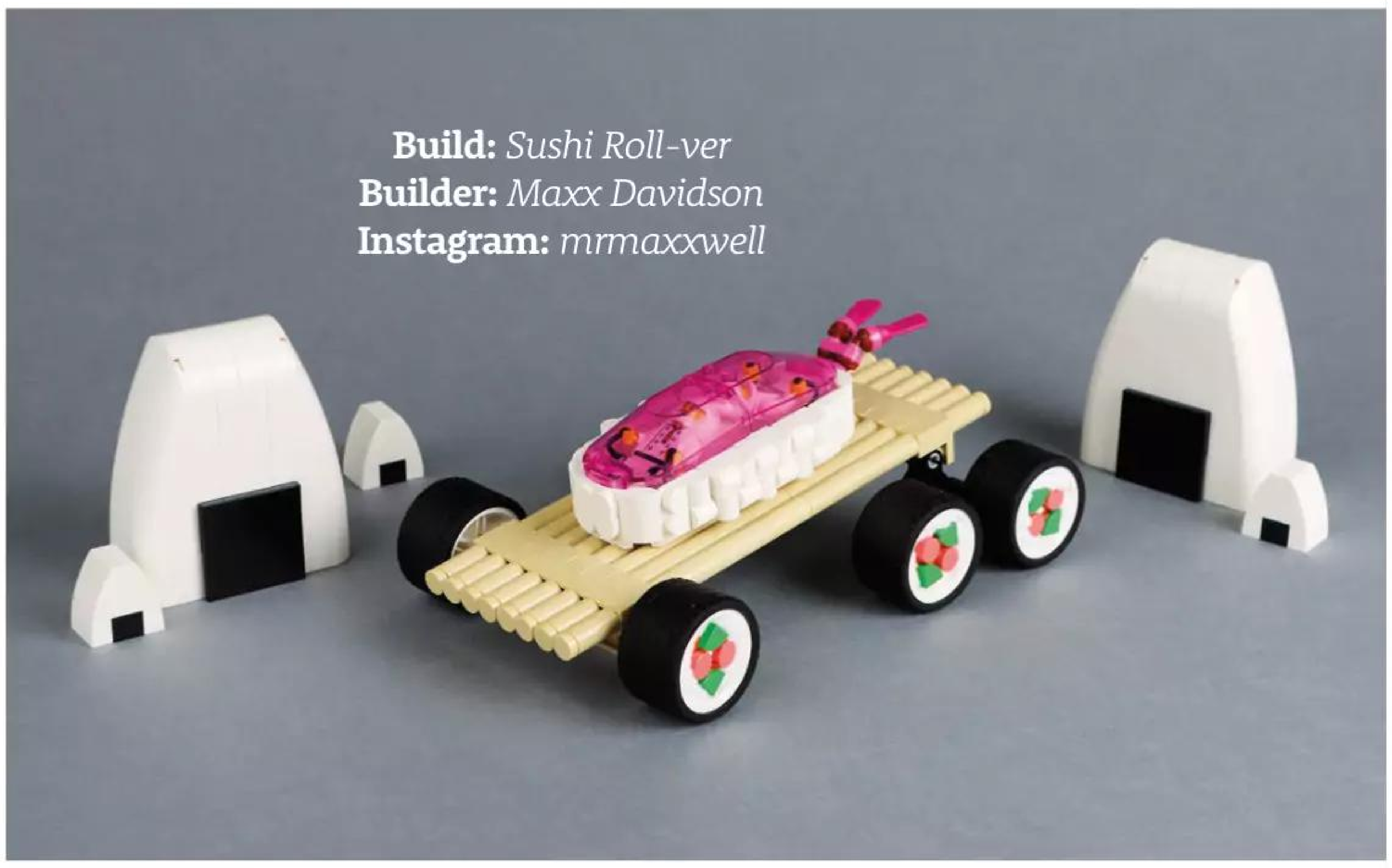
Black wheels, blue wheels, big wheels, small wheels, sushi wheels… all sorts of wheels make Febrovery go zoom. Each year, builders challenge themselves to make some time for space exploration, purely for the love of rovers. Some builders participate with a rover a day for all twenty-eight days; others take it at a slower pace, building one or two during the course of the month.

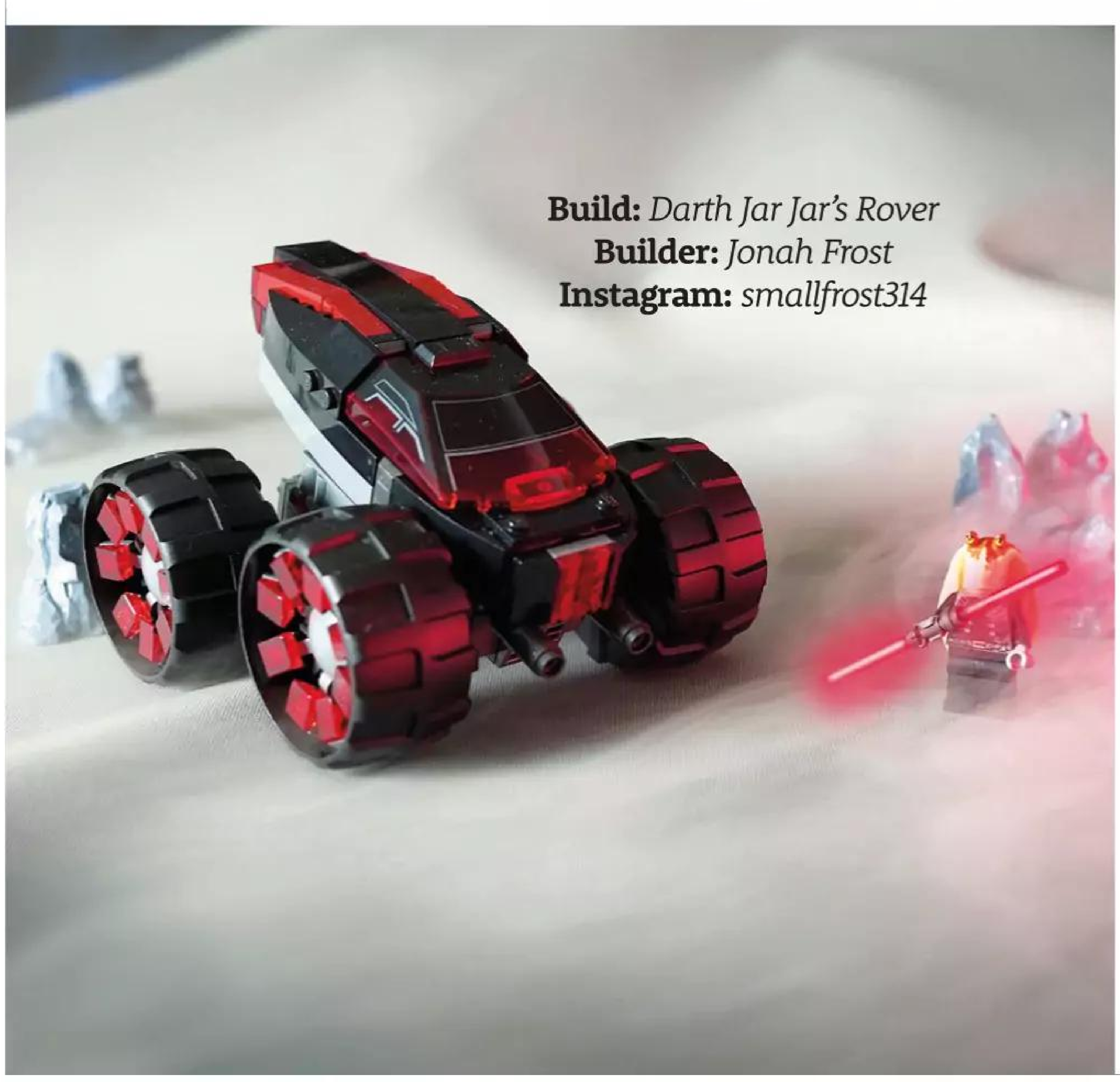
Classic LEGO Space themes are a favorite source of inspiration for colour schemes, but whimsical and creative designs abound, making Febrovery a month to look forward to even for those who spectate instead of build.

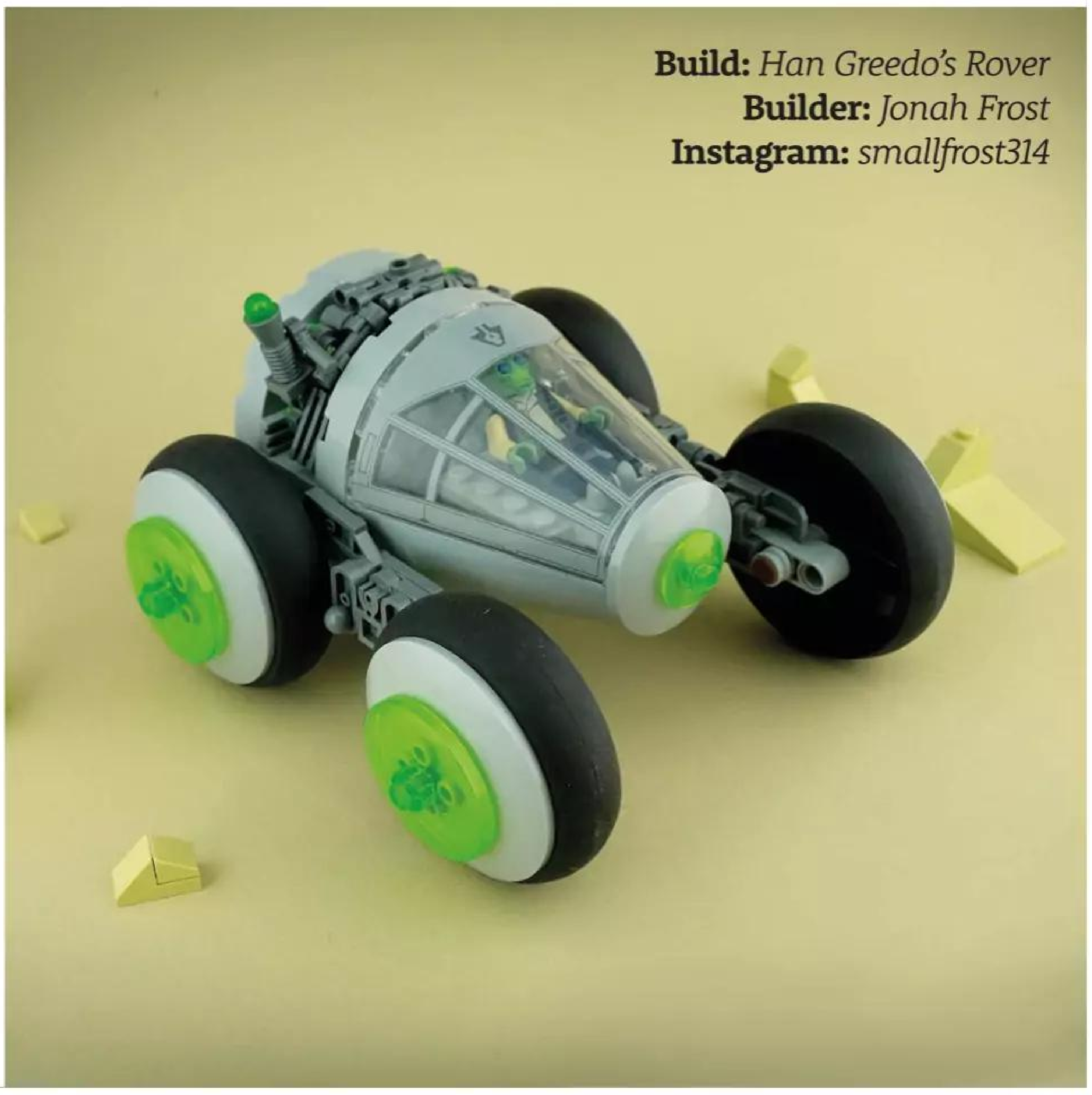
GENEVA DURAND

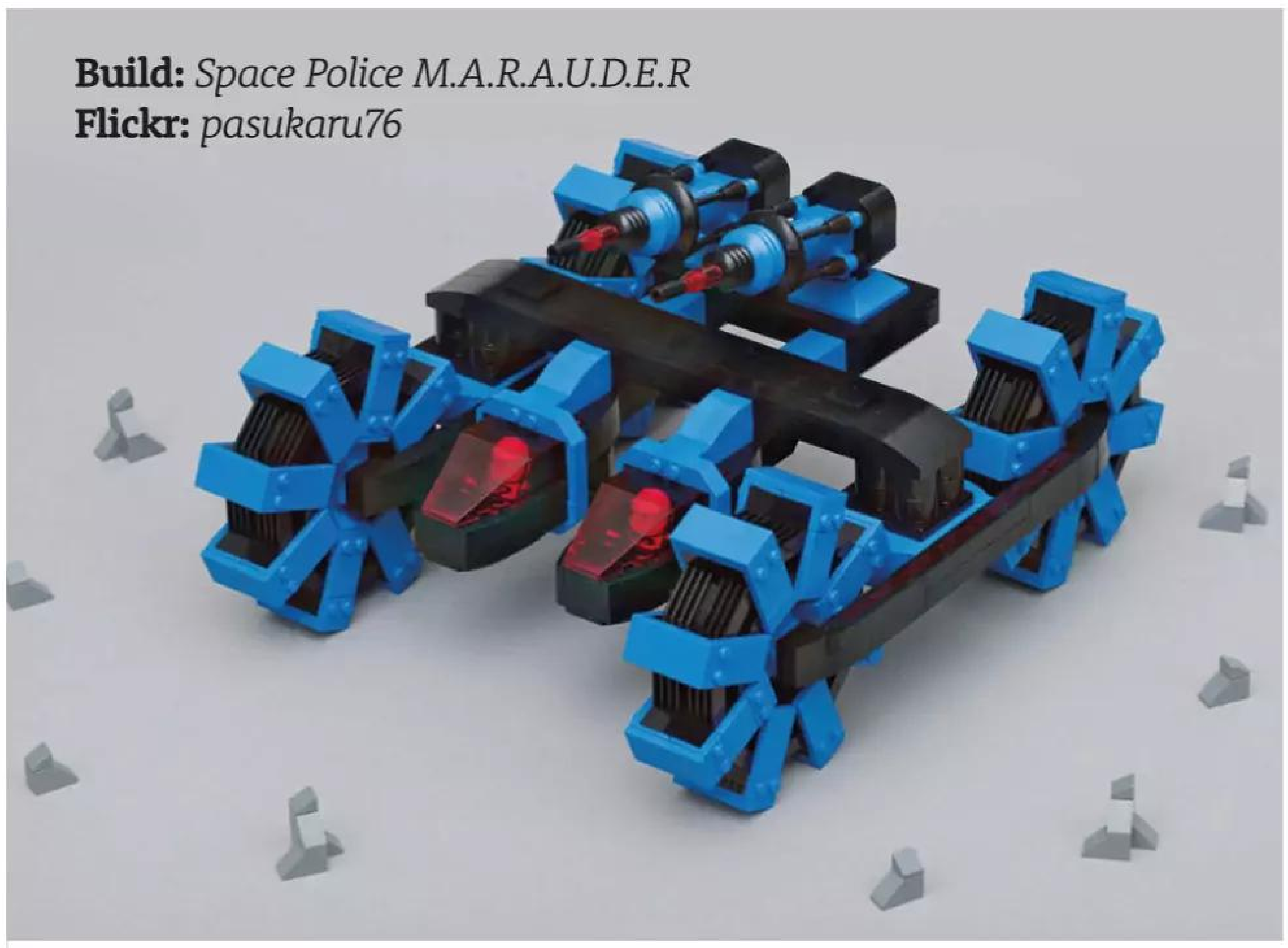

Build: *Pinktron*
Builder: *Ids de Jong*
Flickr: *the_inventor*


Build: *Mini Container Transporter*
Builder: *Lukasz Liwnik*
Instagram: *liwnik*

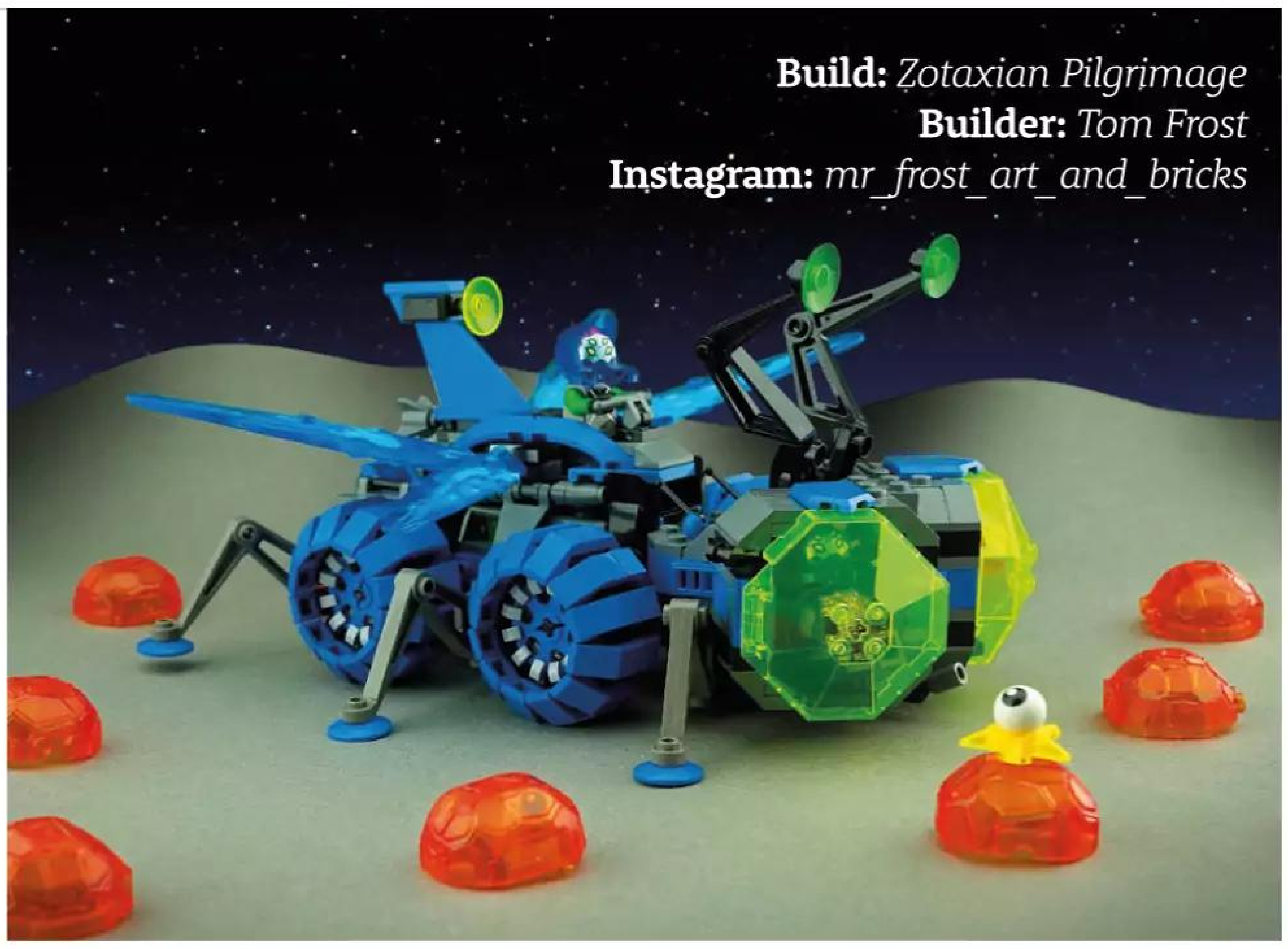

Build: *Sushi Roll-ver*
Builder: *Maxx Davidson*
Instagram: *mrmaxxwell*


Build: *Darth Jar Jar's Rover*
Builder: *Jonah Frost*
Instagram: *smallfrost314*

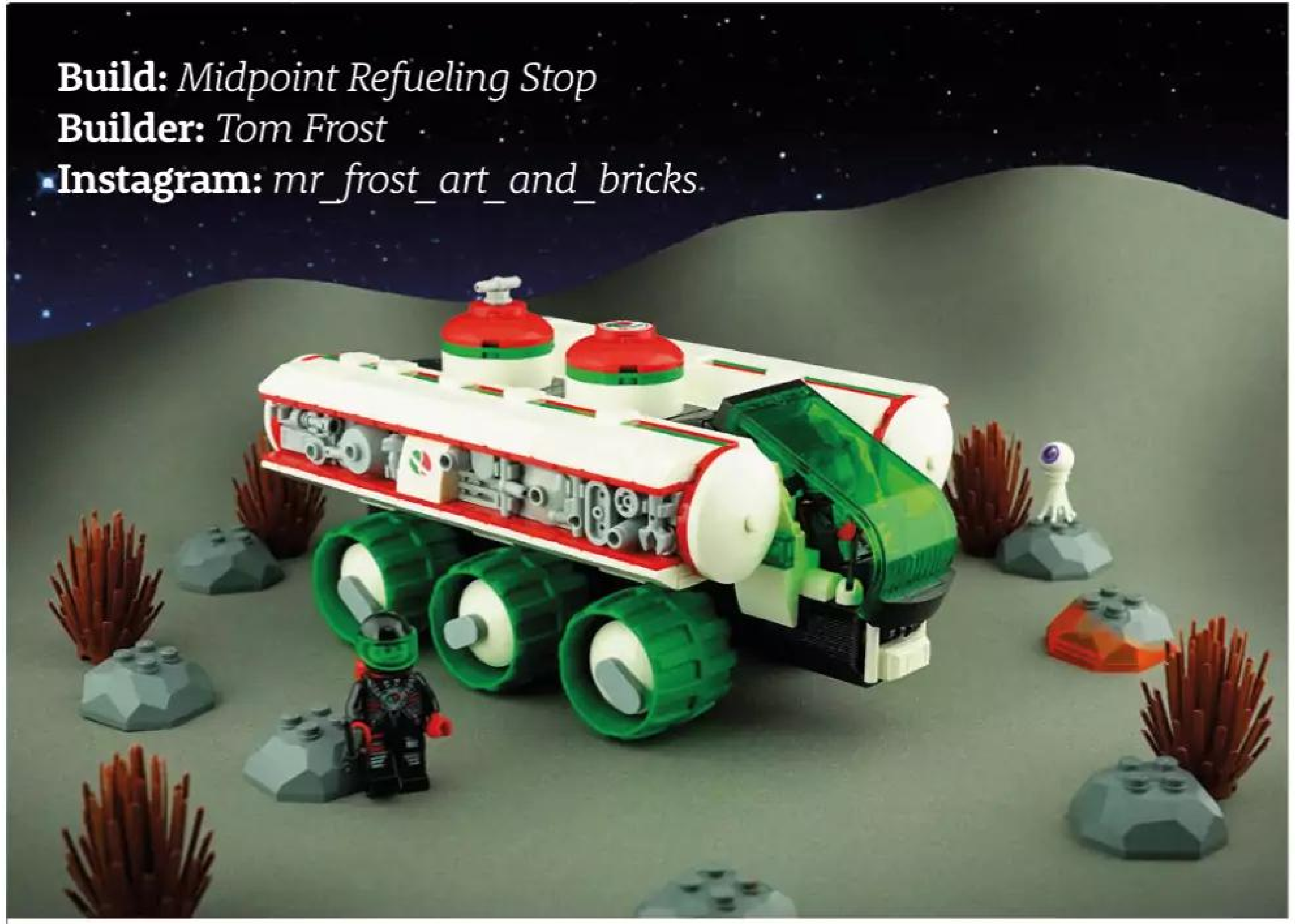

Build: *Han Greedo's Rover*
Builder: *Jonah Frost*
Instagram: *smallfrost314*



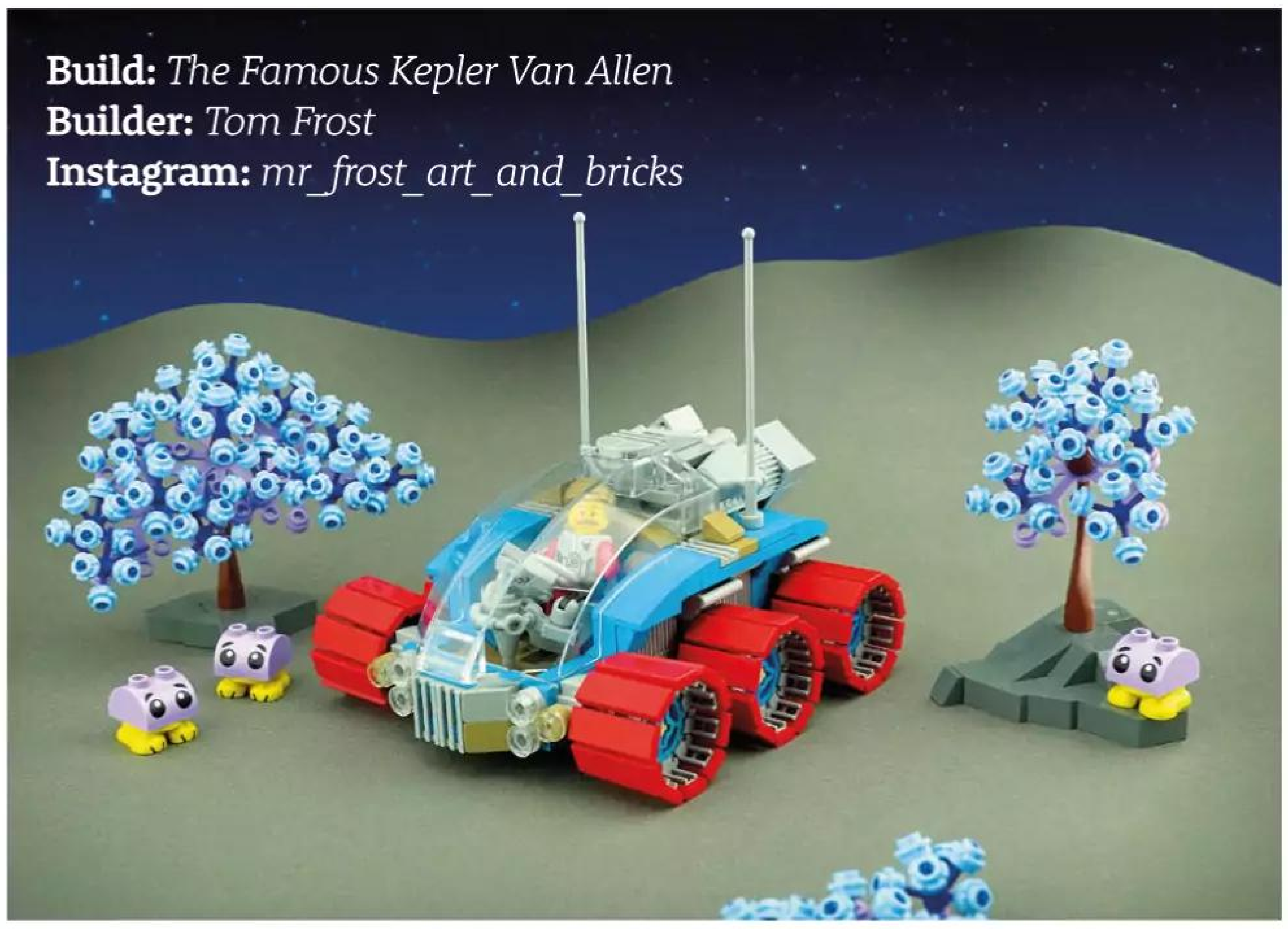
Build: *Space Police M.A.R.A.U.D.E.R*
Flickr: *pasukaru76*



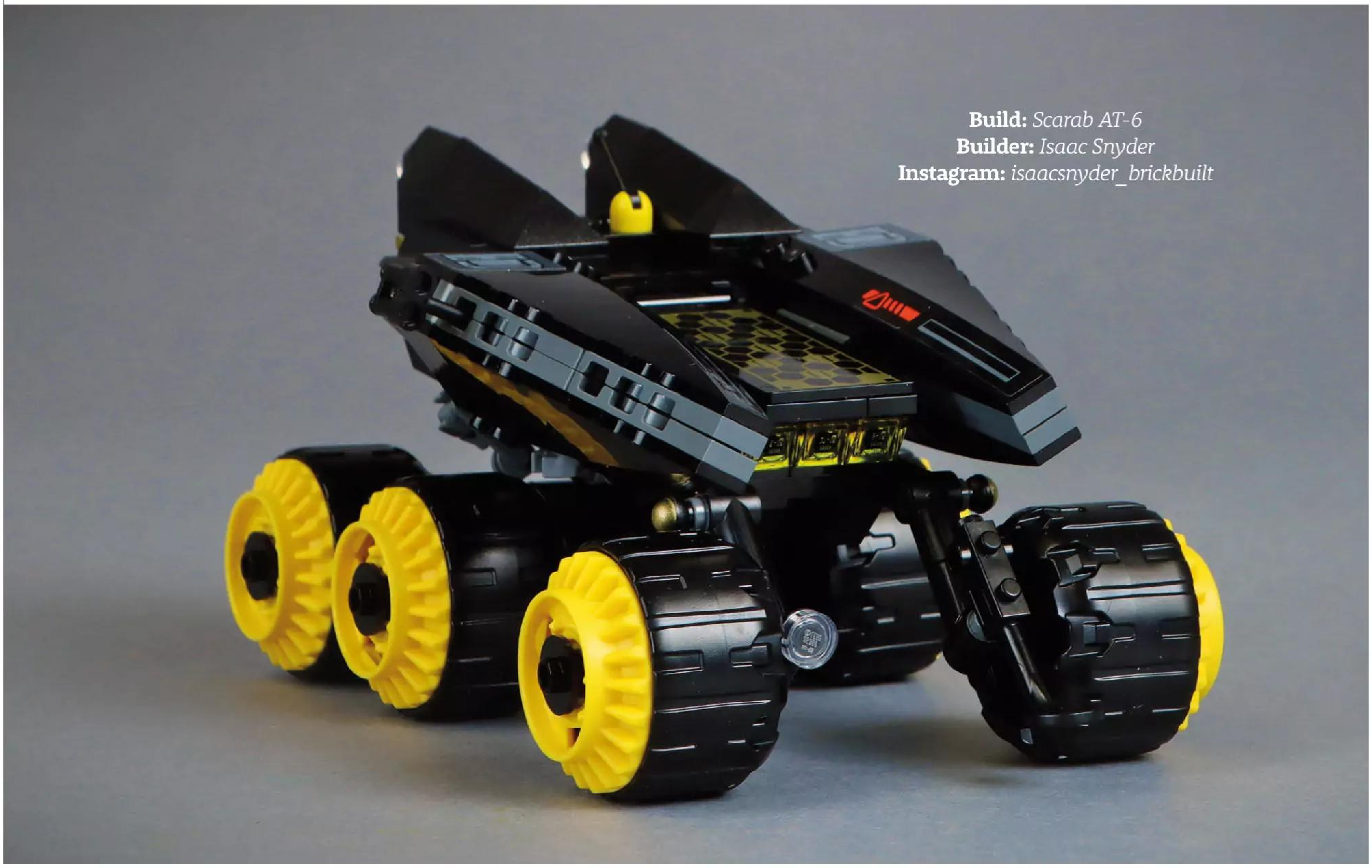
Build: *Zotaxian Pilgrimage*
Builder: *Tom Frost*
Instagram: *mr_frost_art_and_bricks*



Build: *Midpoint Refueling Stop*
Builder: *Tom Frost*
Instagram: *mr_frost_art_and_bricks*



Build: *The Famous Kepler Van Allen*
Builder: *Tom Frost*
Instagram: *mr_frost_art_and_bricks*

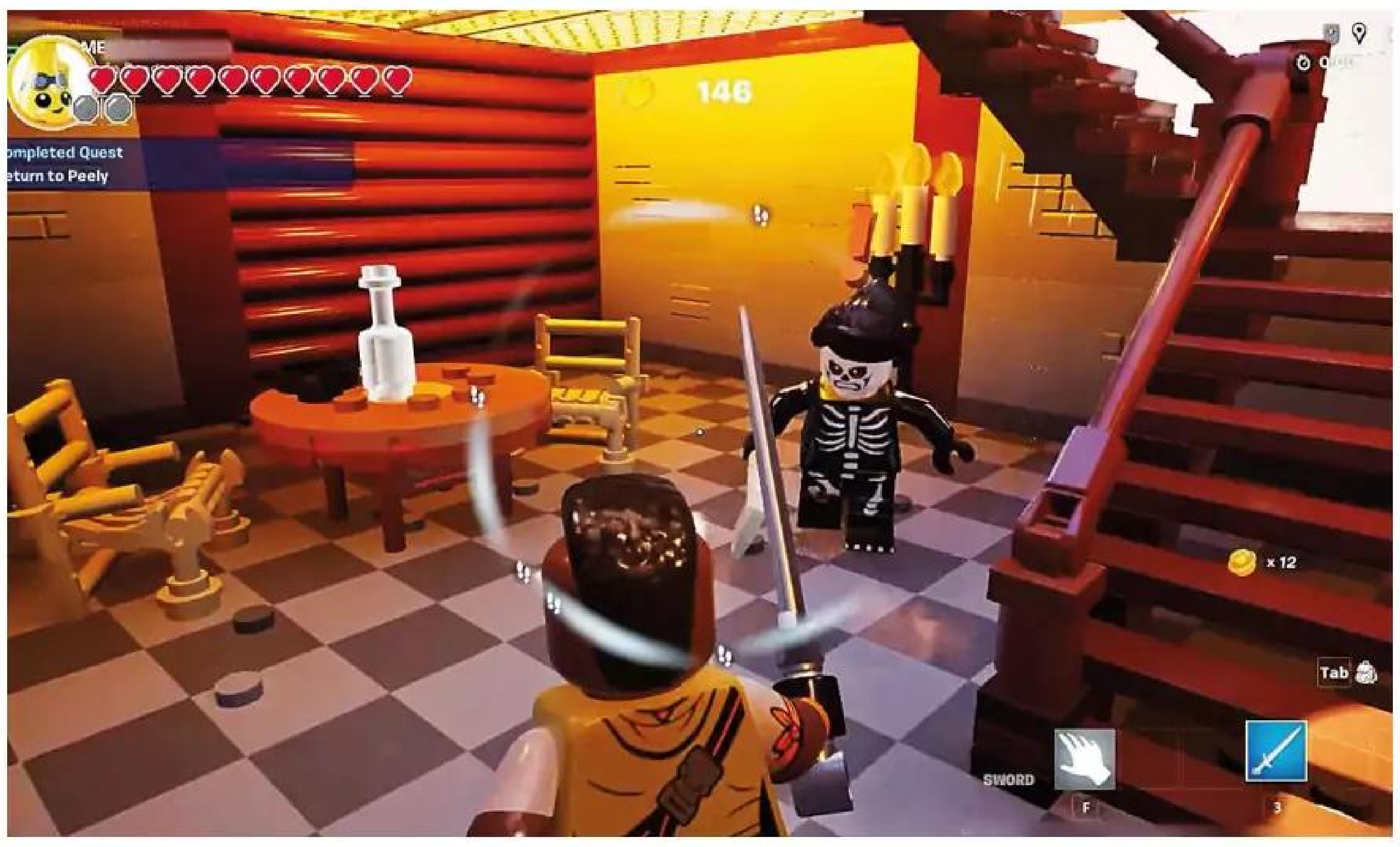


Build: *Scarab AT-6*
Builder: *Isaac Snyder*
Instagram: *isaacsnyder_brickbuilt*

Gaming Download

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE... BRICK BY BRICK

Fortnite has launched a new tutorial that introduces players to the mechanics of action-adventure games



Unreal Engine is the computer graphics software pioneered by Epic Games. It is designed to be relatively easy to learn and quickly produce high quality graphics. Unreal Editor for Fortnite (UEFN) is intended be an even more accessible way to get to grips with Unreal and allows users to create their own mini games in Fortnite – including LEGO Islands.

The LEGO Action Adventure Template is a new option that leads creators through the building blocks for classic action-adventure style gameplay, including quests, combat and hidden puzzles. Through fun and playful levels, creators will learn more about utilising the different abilities of three classes – Warrior, Blaster and Thief. You'll need to use tools and master different play styles in order to successfully progress through each class. Completing levels will reward you with studs, new areas to unlock and in-game trophies.

That's not all. After completing levels as a particular class you will face a boss battle with Rogue Peely Bone in a verse-based attack system. With each class using unique weapons, it will be up to you to master their play styles and defeat Peely Bone in all three encounters. Once you have completed these levels there will be a tutorial and walkthrough on how to learn the mechanics to recreate the experience for yourself. It can definitely be deemed learning through play.

With the skills and knowledge the tutorial provides, you can create your own quests to make stories with a sense of purpose that players can traverse through. These can be one-off quests for a quick reward or tracked quests that have multiple progression stages.

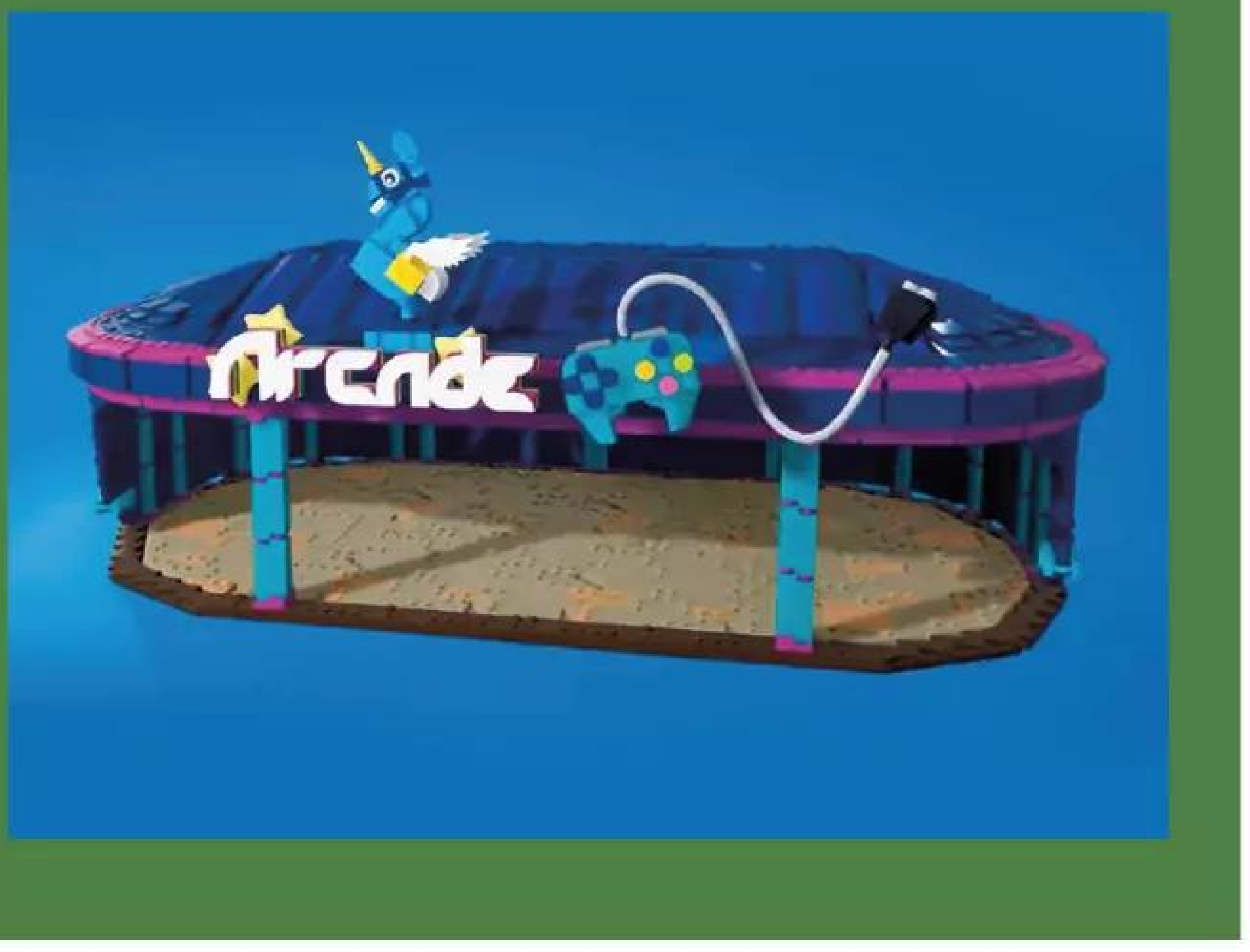
In the action games you create, you can reward players with in-game studs – just like official LEGO video games. LEGO collectible studs can be set as rewards for completing quests, defeating enemies or just for smashing things up. You can craft your own bosses by setting which attacks an NPC (non-playable character) can make, whether it is close range combat or area of effect attacks, and choose which power-ups to provide during battle.

LEGO Action Adventure Template is available now via the project browser in UEFN – just select LEGO Island from the dropdown menu. UEFN is free to download and is compatible with Windows and OS operating systems.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Arcade Tent

With all of the adventuring and dangerous animals that minifigure avatars have to face on a daily basis in the game, a place to relax is essential. What better way to relax than playing video games within a video game? It can't get more meta than that. The Arcade Tent is a fun design that combines a classic Nintendo-style controller with the iconic llama in a logo that seems to use the Pac-Man font. The retro vibes pair with a teal and purple colour scheme that will bring a splash of colour to any modern village.

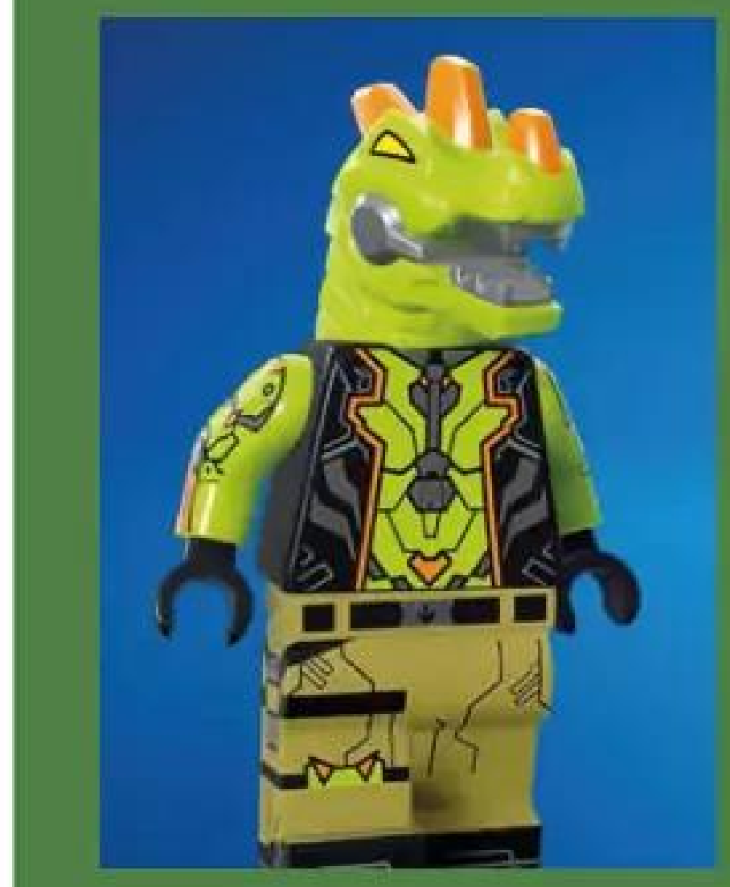


New Fortnite characters

Wave Rider Axo

With their quirky face frills and adorable expressions, axolotls have taken the world by storm with their off kilter cuteness. There aren't many axolotl skins available currently, which makes this surfer style fantastically unique with a wave design t-shirt, flip flops and a tropical colour scheme.

Mecha R3X



Is it a dinosaur? Is it a crocodile? Or is it a robot? Mecha R3X is inspired by all three in a super detailed design. A green dinosaur-like head is augmented with mechanical jaws and shiny metal teeth, with more cybernetics implanted across each limb and even strengthened metal joints.

Robo Fishstick

And that's not the only new mechanical inspired character. Fishstick has another variant and this time he's a robot. Blue lights double as eyes and each of his joints has metal rivets.

Fortnite phraseology

RECYCLING

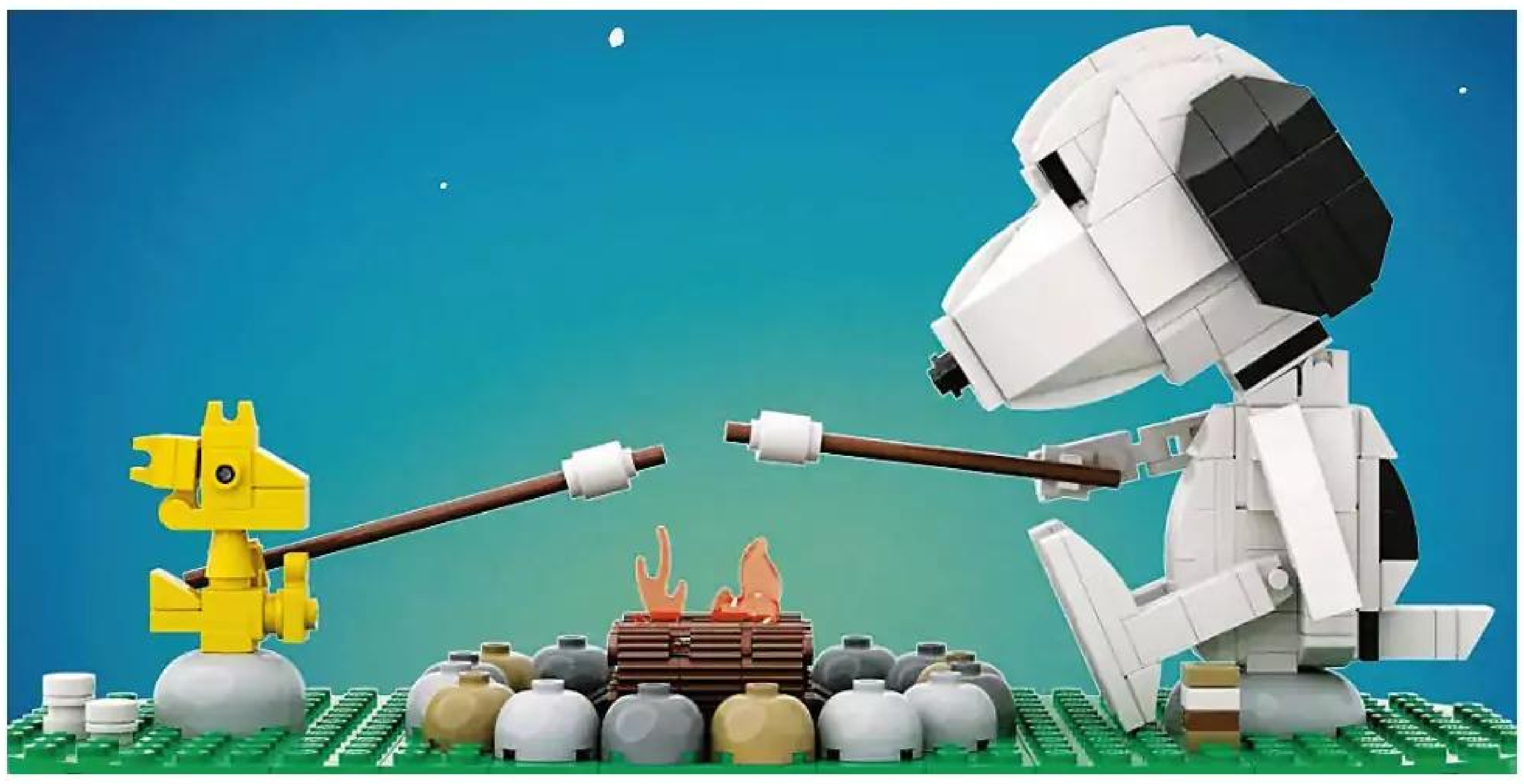
A new station has recently been added to LEGO Fortnite Odyssey that allows players to recycle materials. After building the Stone Breaker you will then be able to craft the Recycling Station for your Village. This will break down old charms and weapons into resources that you can then reuse.

It's very helpful for decluttering storage and getting rid of items or charms that you have upgraded. While the Recycling Station does not give you back all of the resources you originally used, it is a quick way to collect rare resources you require for other recipes.

IDEAS
Latest

CUTE MODELS ARE CHOSEN FOR NEW SETS

Two new animal focused sets are coming to Ideas – one realistic, one fictional



LEGO Ideas has announced the results of the second 2024 LEGO Ideas review, with Design Manager Jordan Scott and Business Lead Julie-Marine Guerin teaming up for the reveal. A grand total of 35 projects reached the 10,000-supporter threshold for this review, but just two were selected to become official LEGO sets — though an additional two projects join the new 'Parking Lot'.

Maximilian Lambrecht's Floating Sea Otter is going to be an official set. His model is as described – an adorable sea otter enjoying some time floating on the water without a care in the world. Transparent blue tiles make up the ocean base for the otter and the animal itself is built directly into that base, aiding in the floating effect.

Plenty of slopes and rounded elements are used on the sea otter and its smiling face is a particular highlight. Ideas users agreed — it was the fastest original idea to hit the 10,000 supporters milestone in this review period.

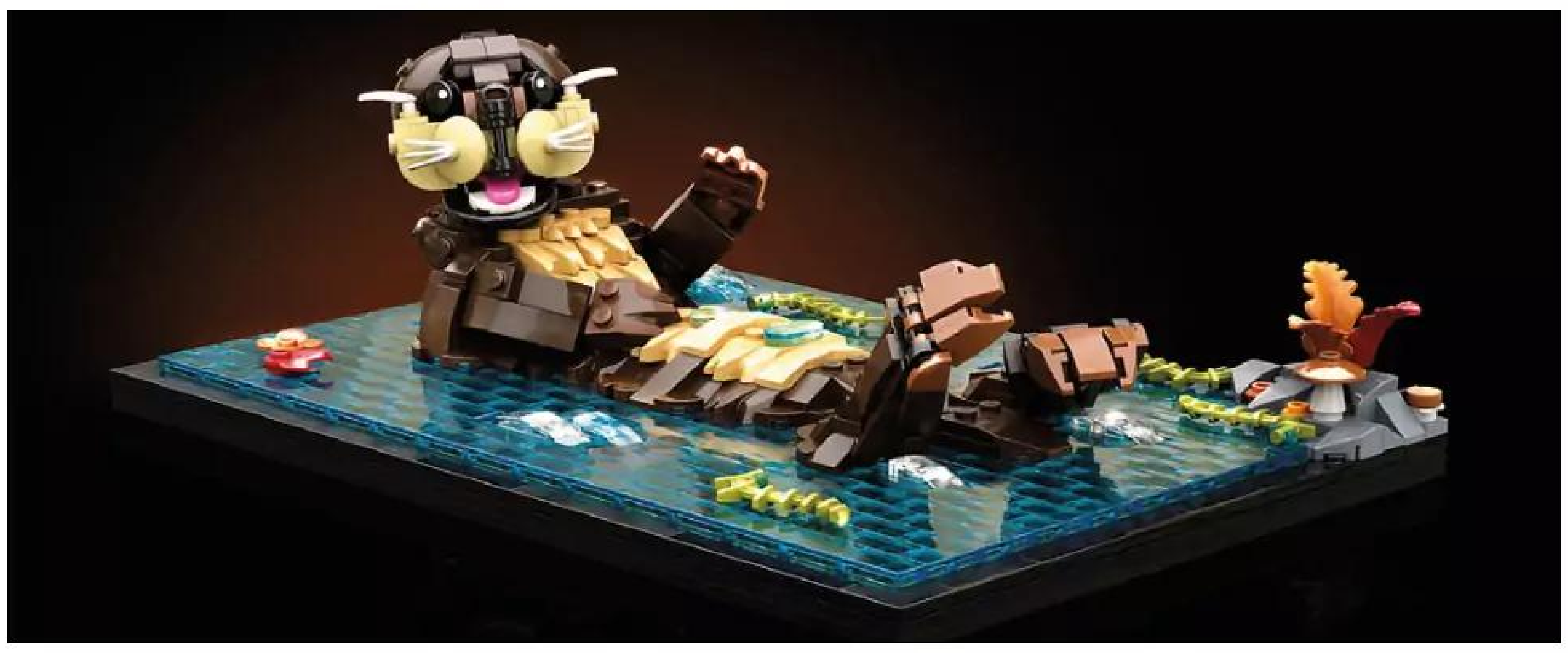
But the charming otter isn't the only project destined for shelves. Robert Becker's Snoopy – Campfire was also chosen to become an official set. The product idea features the ever-lovable Snoopy and his trusty sidekick, Woodstock. This will be the LEGO Group's first model in the beloved world of Peanuts. There's no better way to start than with Snoopy and his friend sharing a sweet moment by the fire — complete with marshmallows, of course.

What sets this round of results apart from the norm is the introduction of the LEGO Ideas Parking Lot. Previously, if a fan's idea was not chosen they would have to resubmit and gather supporters all over again. But now, select projects will be placed in the Parking Lot and await a final decision.

Product ideas can be placed on hold for a variety of reasons, such as difficulties obtaining the license for a franchise or if the review team simply wants more time to evaluate the build. This time around, tkel86's Tintin — Space Rocket and Bro3's Downton Abbey: Highclere Castle have been placed in limbo. These two projects will undergo further review, with a final decision to be reached sometime within the next 12 to 18 months.

With two new models announced and extra hope for some concepts, it has proven a fruitful review period for Ideas.

RYAN EVERLETH



Winning build

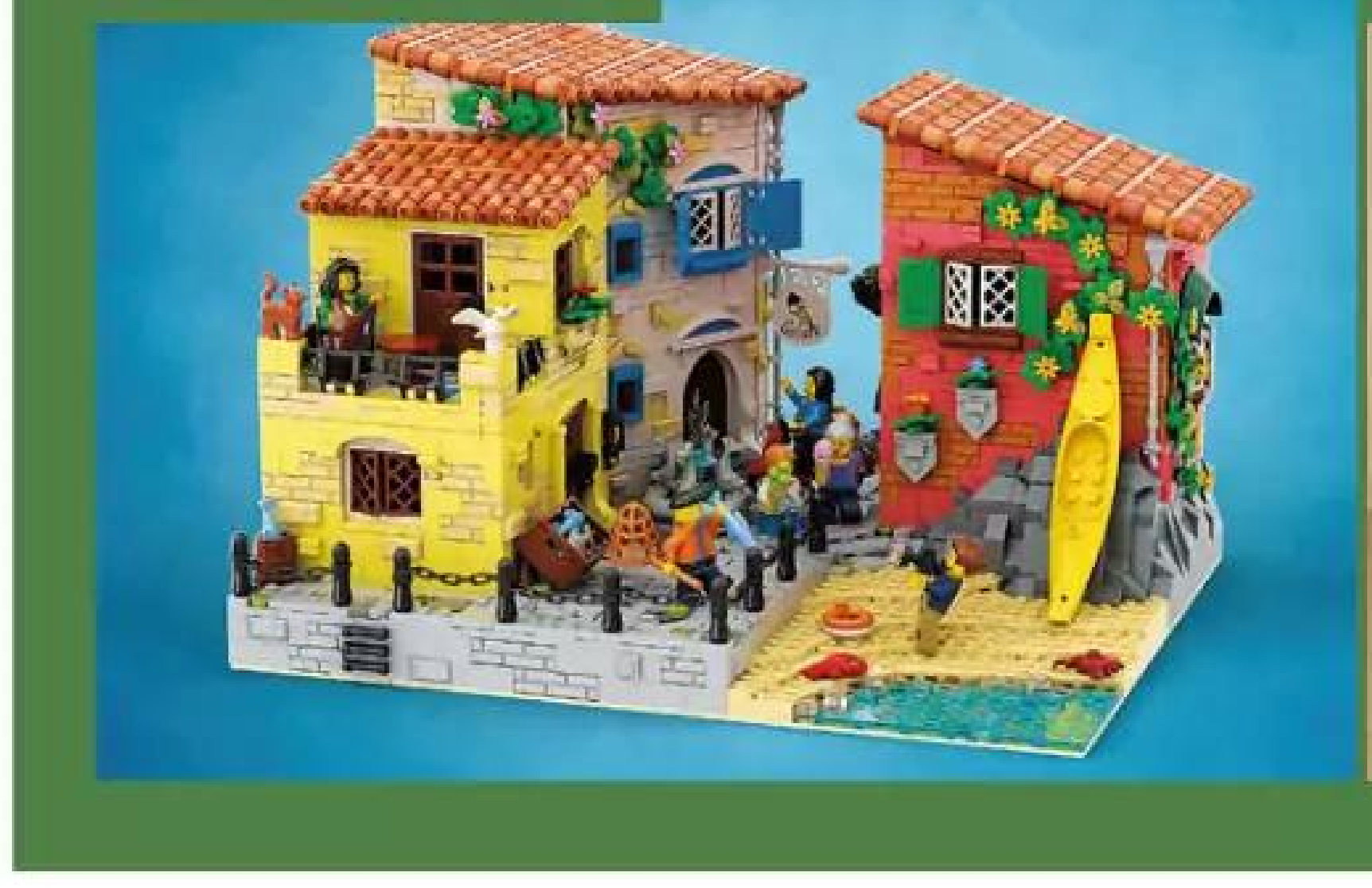
The winners of the Get Fresh for Feb! contest have been announced, with IsleOh's Serene Moments taking home the grand prize. Challenged to build some home décor to celebrate the return of spring, IsleOh created a little collection of brightly coloured decorations. A cosy book is the centrepiece, complete with some brick-built lettering and a full-page illustration. And it's held up by a simple display stand to properly show off some excellent work with tiles and sloped elements. A hot cup of tea and flower complement the book nicely — especially the mug's hanging teabag and little puff of steam.

Gathering support

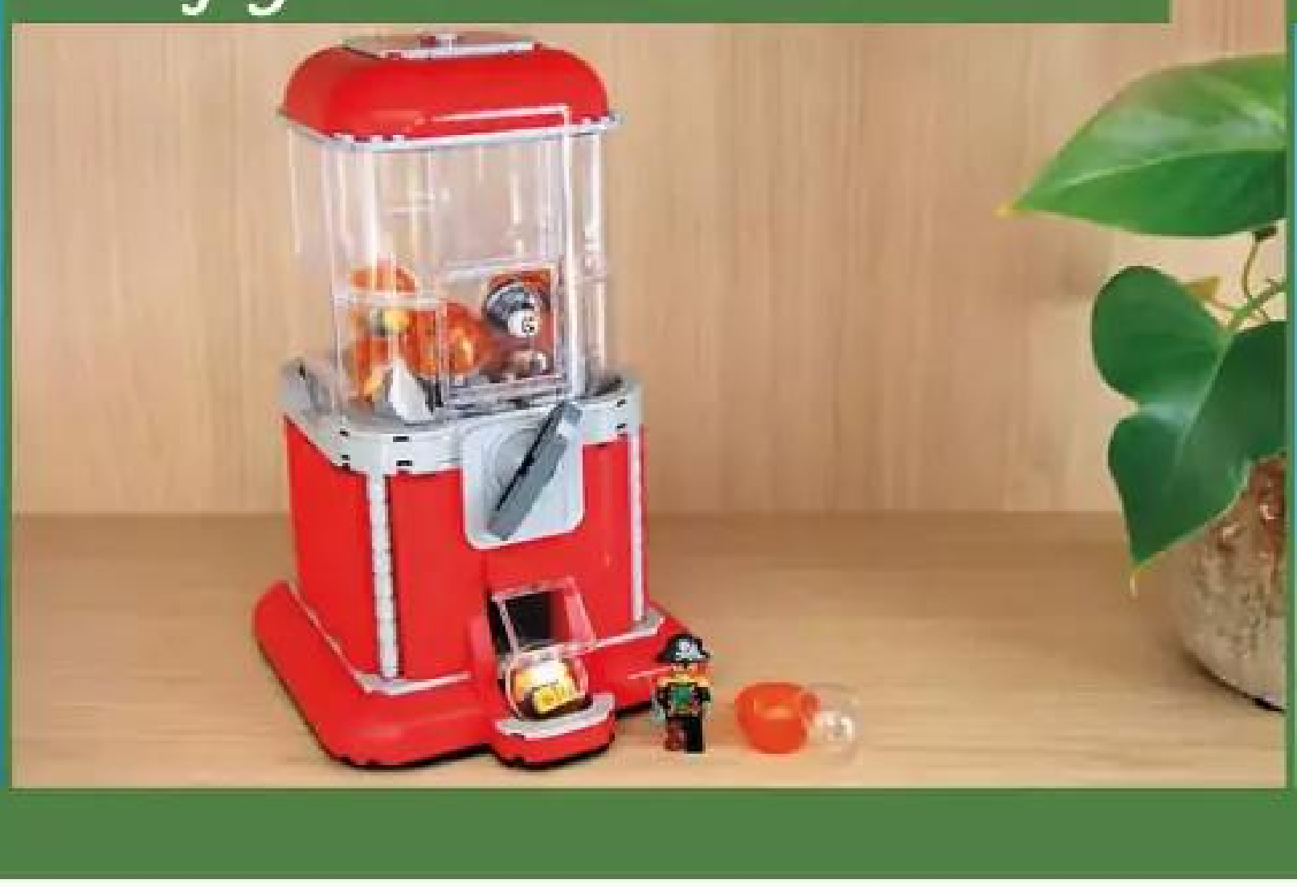
Historical LEGO sets typically trend towards historical fiction, but SJs Workshop's Shakespeare's Globe is firmly rooted in theatrical history. Based on the famous theatre situated on the Thames' Southbank, the project has everything from the white timbered exterior to the all-important stage inside. Just under 5,000 pieces go into the theatre. The cross-section design allows for all of the interior details to shine, as well as giving plenty of open space in front of the stage for minifigures to crowd and enjoy the latest production of MacBrick.

In the pipeline

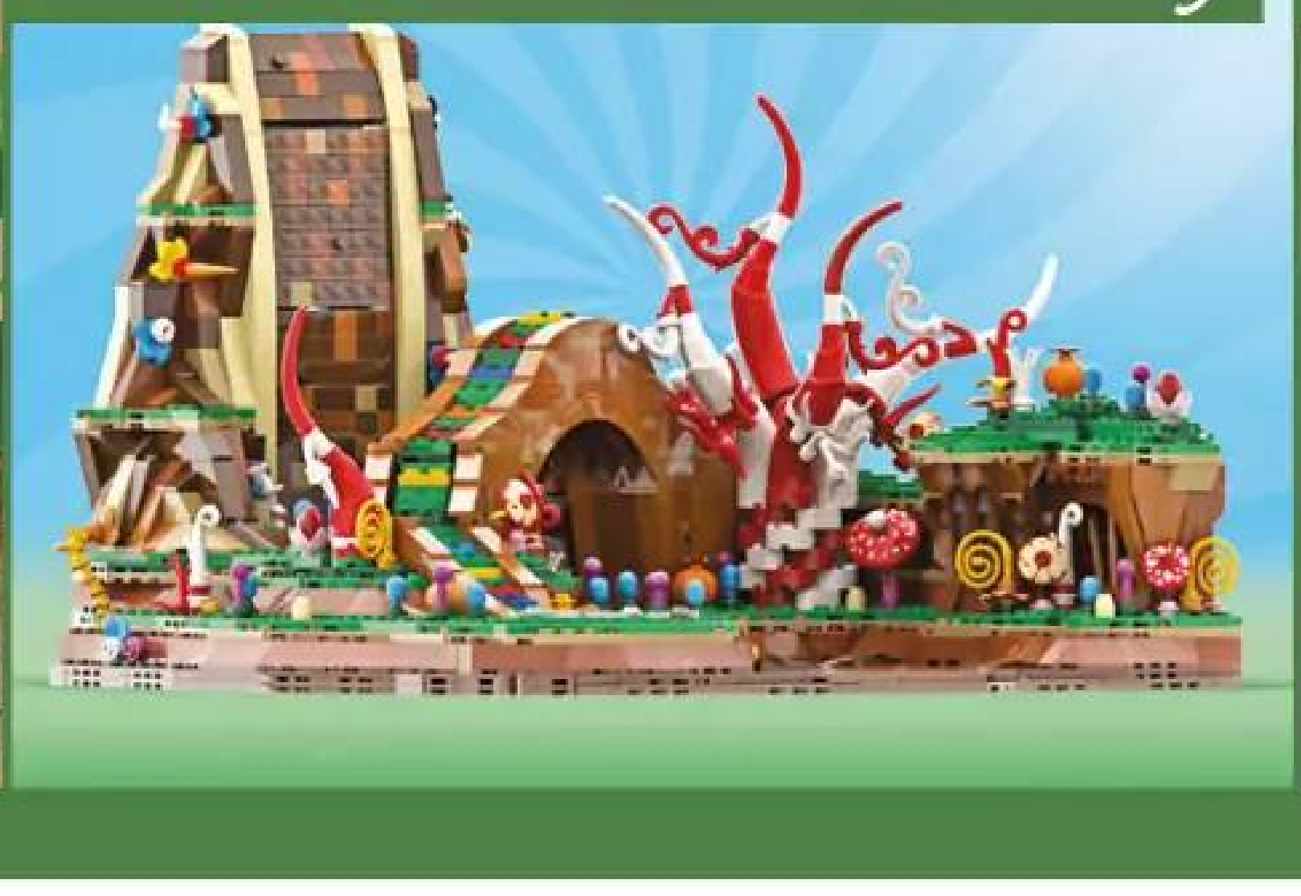
Italian Riviera



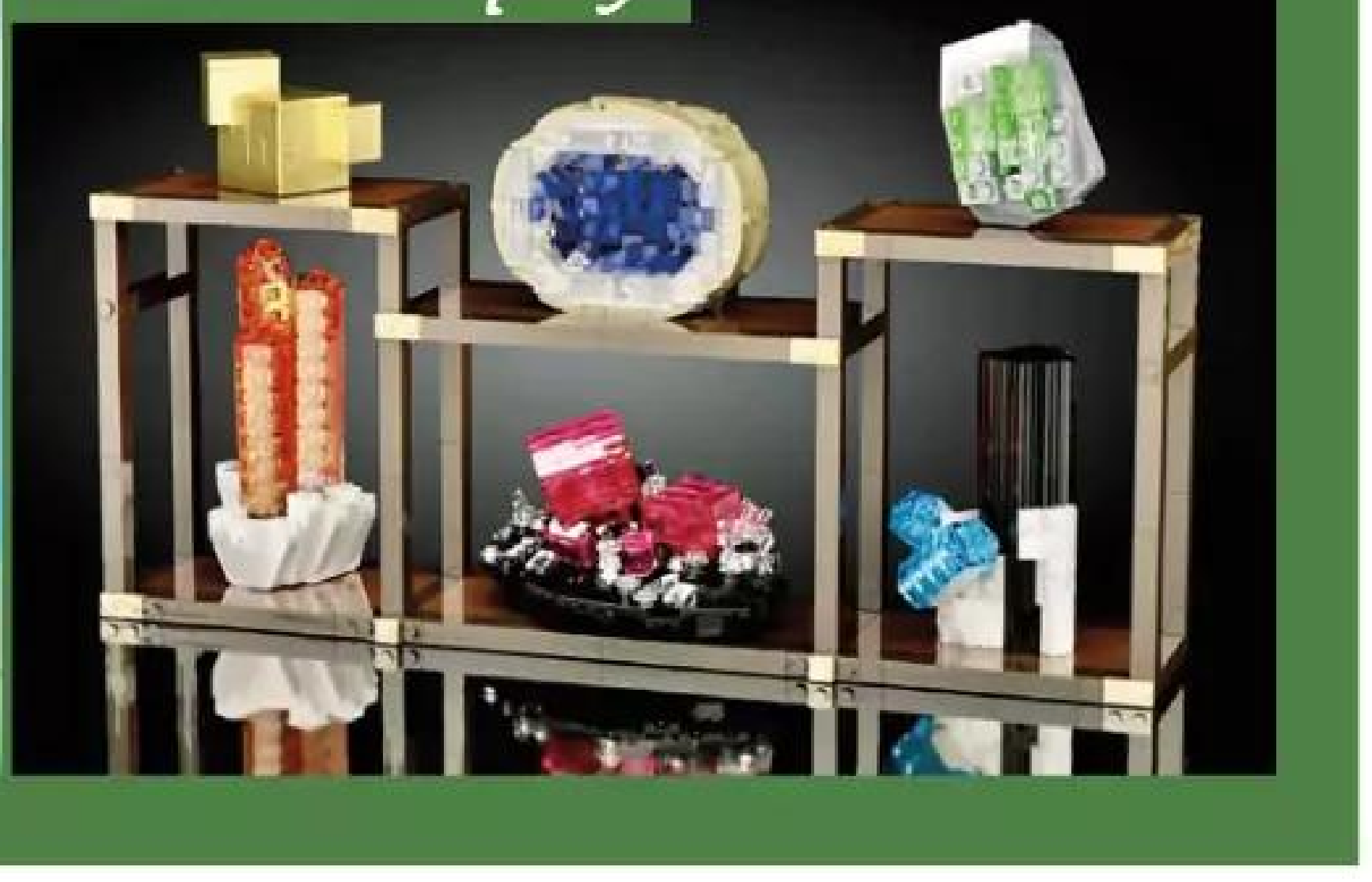
Minifigure Gumball Machine



Charlie & the Chocolate Factory



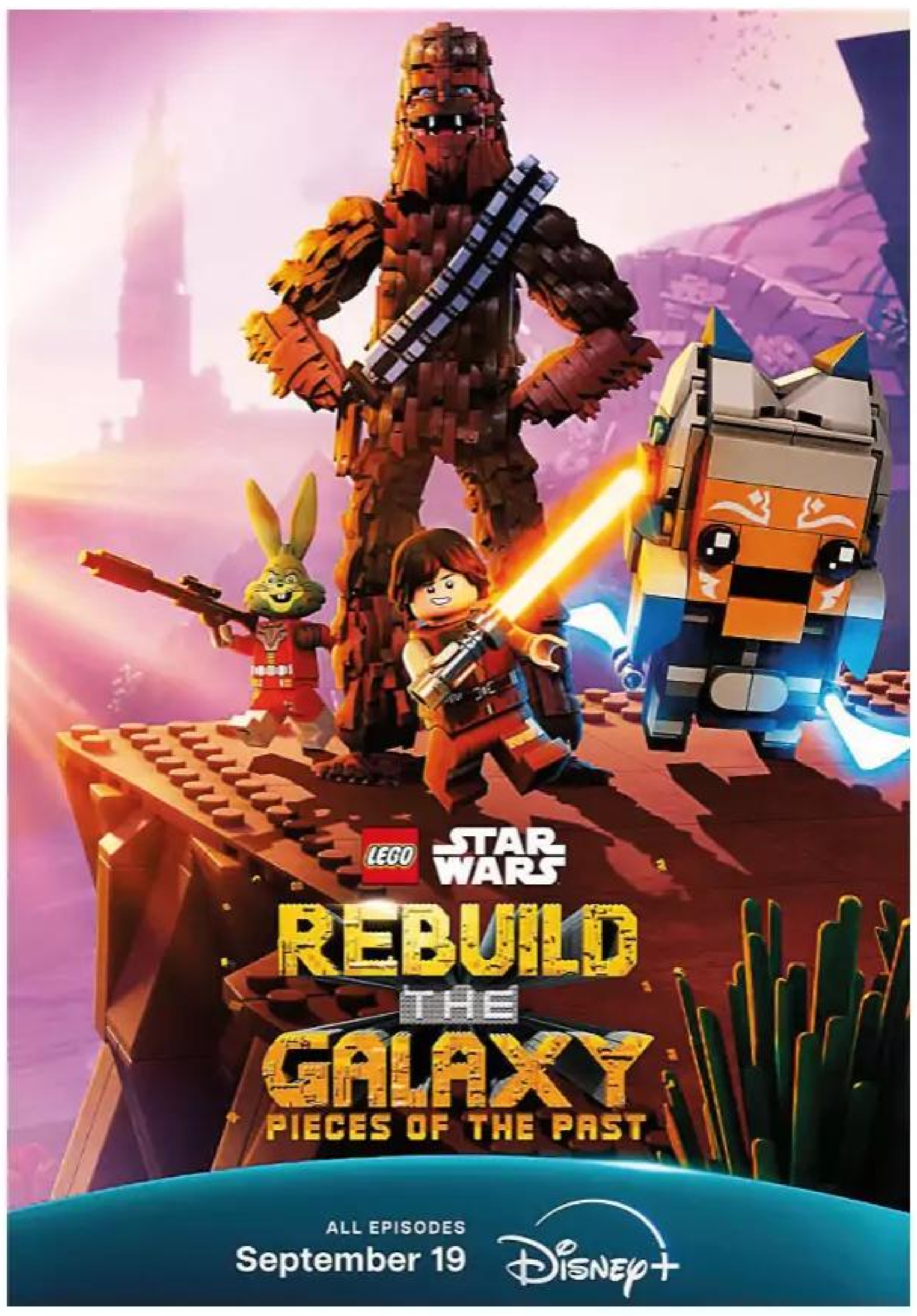
Minerals Display



Screen Time

REBUILDING THE GALAXY... AGAIN

Ahmed Best and Ashley Eckstein are returning to a galaxy far, far away in new LEGO Star Wars animation



Last year, LEGO Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy dumped the brick bucket out all over the table and mixed up every aspect of a galaxy far, far away to create an epic new saga. By the end of the story, three new heroes and a new villain had emerged, with the door left open for new adventures.

Showrunners Dan Hernandez and Benji Samit shared a pre-recorded message with crowds at Star Wars Celebration Japan to reveal what they have been working on. “We’ve been asked what’s next for Sig, Yesi and Jedi Bob? Will there be more Darth Jar Jar?” Dan declared. “Star Wars Celebration fans, we’re excited to announced that their story will continue.”

Jar Jar Binks actor Ahmed Best was on stage to reveal the poster for the new batch of episodes, subtitled Pieces of the Past. Surprisingly, the much-maligned green bunny bounty hunter Jaxxon will be appearing in the show – demonstrating that Jedi Bob was just the first of the obscure characters the creatives are willing to put on screen.

It seems that this time around, characters won’t just be minifigure style – the towering 75371 Chewbacca statue and boxy 40539 Ahsoka Tano will also be in the show.

To the delight of fans at the event, the actor who will be voicing BrickHeadz Ahsoka arrived on stage. “There’s so much heart in BrickHeadz Ahsoka, and we’re all going to relate to her,” said Ashley Eckstein, who voiced the traditional version of the character in The Clone Wars and Rebels. “You’re going to love it.”

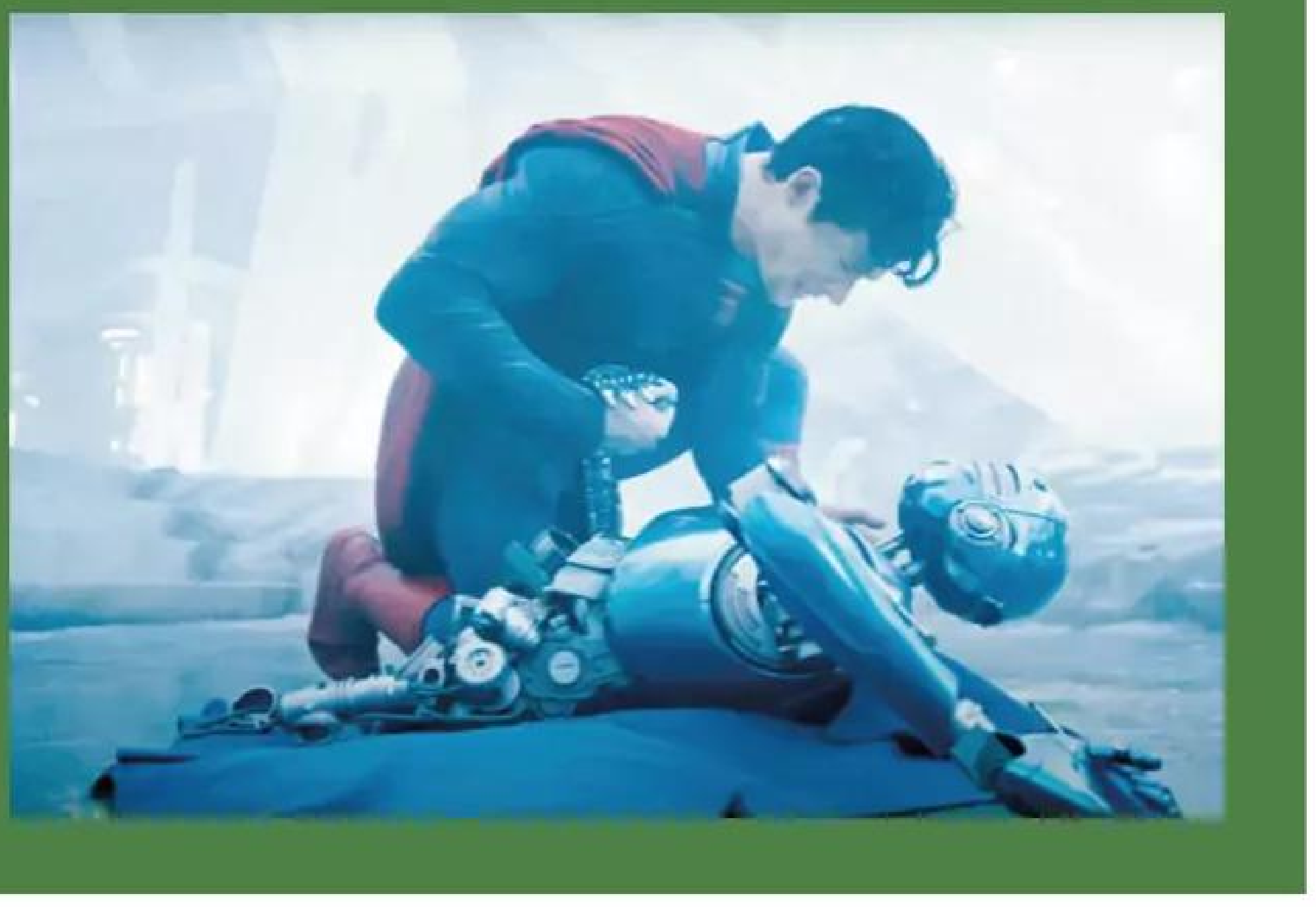
Four animated episodes will launch on Disney+ on September 19 and they will tell a complete story set in the mixed-up version of the Star Wars galaxy. Three LEGO sets launched alongside the first season – so fans will have to wait to see if there are more models for Season 2.

SUPERMAN RETURNS TO THE BIG SCREEN

DC is about to start its cinematic universe anew, after spending more than a decade struggling to find a consistent direction for its stories. James Gunn’s Superman will arrive in cinemas on July 11 and it feels like the Man of Steel has the weight of a studio on his shoulders.

For James Gunn, no stranger to super hero movies, he has focused on the characters in order to find the core of the story. “The film is optimistic yet not without its darker moments,” he told Sci Fi Now. “It’s a big science fiction movie, but at the same time, incredibly grounded in the way we treat the characters and everything else. I wanted it to be something that was the essence of Superman, that was the Superman that I grew up with, that I loved, but also something new at the same time.”

The movie will follow Clark Kent on a journey to reconcile his Kryptonian heritage with his adoptive family in Smallville, Kansas – and at some point on that quest, he’ll find a pet dog.



One we want...

The Marvel diorama models are great at capturing a frame from the movie and giving it dimension. It would be nice to have a set inspired by Thunderbolts* to recreate one of its epic moments – it’s also probably the best chance fans have of getting the full team as minifigures.

Upcoming movies

TRON ARES
RELEASE DATE: *October 10*
WRITTEN BY: *Jesse Wigutow, Jack Thorne, Steven Lisberger*
DIRECTED BY: *Joachim Rønning*
CAST: *Jared Leto, Greta Lee, Gillian Anderson, Jeff Bridges*

WICKED: FOR GOOD
RELEASE DATE: *November 21*
WRITTEN BY: *Winnie Holzman, Dana Fox*
DIRECTED BY: *Jon M. Chu*
CAST: *Cynthia Erivo, Ariana Grande, Jonathan Bailey, Ethan Slater*

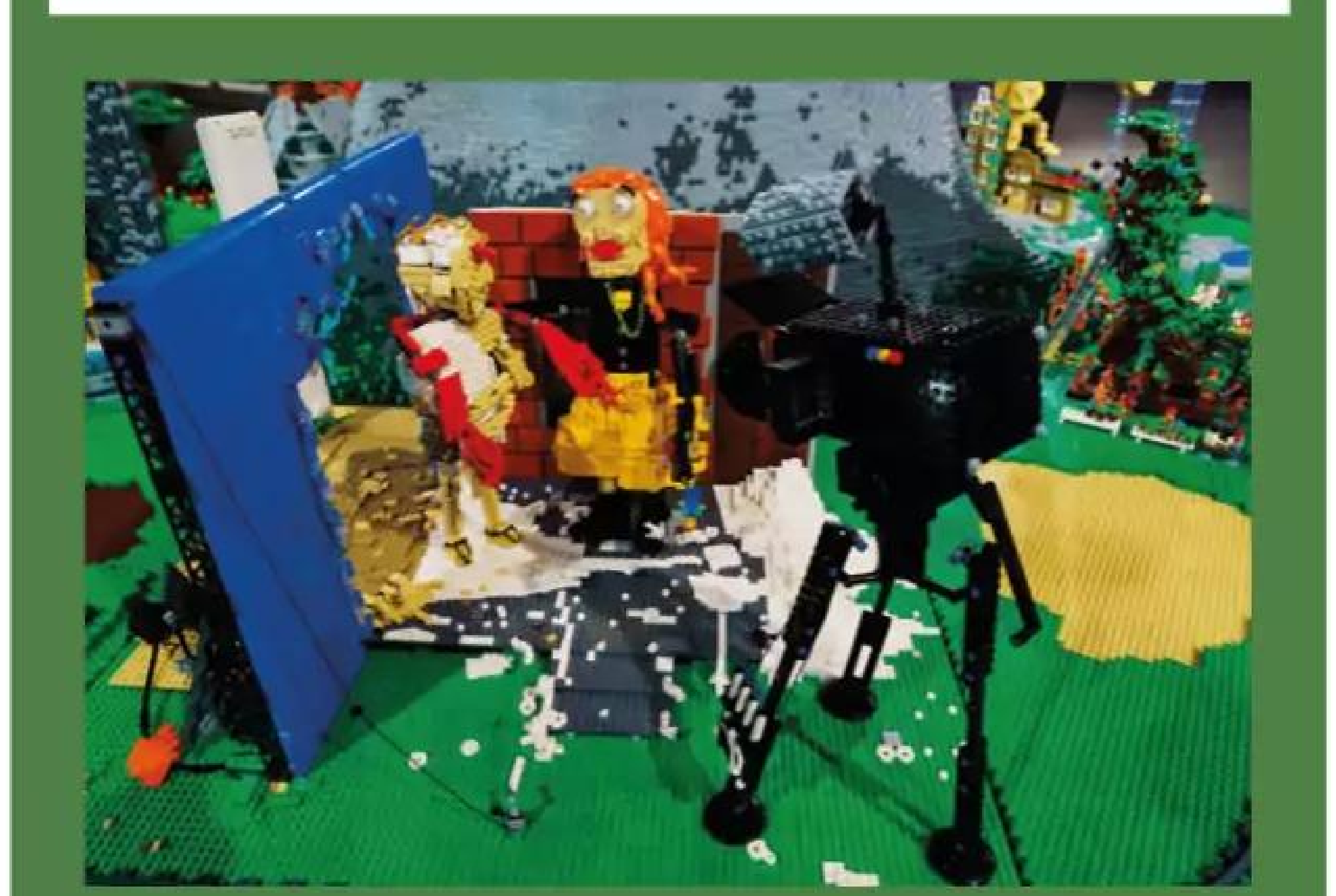
ZOOTOPIA 2
RELEASE DATE: *November 26*
WRITTEN BY: *Jared Bush*
DIRECTED BY: *Jared Bush, Byron Howard*
CAST: *Ginnifer Goodwin, Jason Bateman, Ke Huy Quan, Fortune Feimster*

Upcoming series

EYES OF WAKANDA
WHERE TO WATCH: *Disney+*
PREMIERE DATE: *August 6*
EPISODES: *4*
SHOWRUNNER: *Todd Harris*
CAST: *Winnie Harlow, Cress Williams, Patricia Belche, Larry Herron, Adam Gold*

PEACEMAKER SEASON 2
WHERE TO WATCH: *Max*
PREMIERE DATE: *August 21*
EPISODES: *8*
SHOWRUNNER: *James Gunn*
CAST: *John Cena, Danielle Brooks, Freddie Stroma, Jennifer Holland*

LEGO Masters-piece



LEGO Masters New Zealand contestants Andrew and Harry love puns, so when they had to build a romantic comedy scene decided to give it a Roman flavour. They constructed two oversized figures and a camera that is shooting the scene.

LEGO POKÉMON IS OFFICIALLY A GO

The latest LEGO partnership will see Pikachu and friends reinterpreted in the brick

LEGO
POKéMON

In the long list of films, shows and other properties that fans never expected the LEGO Group to gain the licence to, Pokémon was near the top. The Pokémon franchise began with the release of its first games in Japan in 1996, with the trading cards following a few months later.

Then, in 1998, Pokémon exploded into the international market, captivating audiences across the world with its lovable characters and games. But despite its worldwide popularity, LEGO Pokémon always seemed like a pipe dream — MEGA has held the licence to brick-built Pokémon sets since 2017. But now, the LEGO Group and The Pokémon Company International have announced a multi-year partnership that will finally bring the iconic mega-franchise into the brick, beginning in 2026.

"The LEGO Group and Pokémon have strong shared values of imagination, creativity and fun, making this the perfect partnership to deliver unique, meaningful and engaging ways for Trainers to experience the Pokémon brand," said Gaku Susai, Chief Product and Experience Officer at The Pokémon Company International. "Working with the best-in-class team at the LEGO Group and seeing their dedication and passion for the project has culminated in an innovative and groundbreaking collaboration."

Exact details on the collaboration are sparse for now, but one thing's for certain — fans can expect to receive official LEGO Pokémon sets for the first time next year.

RYAN EVERLETH

Anthony's take

"Is the Pokémon franchise too big to be made into a LEGO theme?"

Both Pokémon and LEGO bricks have long-standing fan bases and for both there is an enduring set of players that never left either their digital pets or plastic toys behind, but have instead grown up with them. In that respect, this partnership seems ideal... yet my immediate concern is simply practical – is the Pokémon franchise too big to be made into a LEGO theme?

There are now more than 1,000 Pokémon and the franchise seems forever stuck between a need and desire to appeal to new players whilst also massaging the nostalgia of the older ones. Hence Charizard, Pikachu, Eevee and many of the other original 151 critters still being the lead mascots of the series as opposed to the more recent 'mons.

That means the real challenge is what does a LEGO Pokémon theme look like in practice? The most obvious way to go is perhaps for a new series of collectible brick-built figures, but it would take literal years to go through the back catalogue.

Models built off locations face a similar issue – every region has eight official gyms with their own look and typing based on the leader's type specialism. But choosing between whether builders want Brock's, Roxanne's, Roark's, Grant's or Gordie's rock-type gym feels simultaneously arbitrary and significant.

There are roughly 20 to 30 Pokémon I'd like to see in LEGO form and that's it. If they're not the ones released, then the theme might not have as much appeal to me. This tension between individual preference and the sheer scale of the franchise means LEGO Pokémon will certainly be a fascinating experiment within the LEGO portfolio, the likes of which hasn't been seen before. All of a sudden, the Pokémon series' mantra, 'Gotta catch 'em all', has become a potentially massive – and inevitably expensive – task.

News in pictures

Left: *Star of The Lord of the Rings movies Sean Astin helped the LEGO Group to promote the release of 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire.*

Right: *LEGO House is opening a new LEGO Masters experience this September, promising to deliver brick-building activities inspired by the television show.*

The Brick Debate

Is City or Friends the better real-world theme?

Kat says...

"Friends sets are easy to display together as they share the same vibrant aesthetic."

While LEGO Friends had a rocky beginning, it has developed into a theme that has thankfully evolved beyond its obsession with everything pink and fluffy. In fact it's now hard to imagine that this theme ever tried to conform to such outdated gender stereotypes. I've long been a champion of Friends because of its evolution. It is a theme that has beautifully embraced diversity and representation.

That is immediately apparent in its cast of characters. It began with the girls – Andrea, Olivia, Stephanie, Mia and Emma – all with developed backstories, distinctive hobbies and different family units. It allowed many fans to see themselves represented via mini-dolls. That representation has only expanded further. There's now Autumn who has a limb difference, Jordin who has vitiligo and others who celebrate different aspects of diversity.

Diversity isn't only found in the characters. While LEGO City is churning out police stations, hospitals and pizza joints faster than an advanced futuristic metropolis, Friends is refreshingly varied. The first 2025 wave has everything from a cooking school to a beekeeper's house, a cotton candy stand to an airport. Every model offers a different building experience and the wonderful selection provides enough variety to make an interesting display.

Friends sets are more detailed too. When I've been building recent LEGO City buildings I can't help but compare them to the ones I was playing with when I was younger and think about how empty they now seem. I don't get that feeling with Friends sets. They are always packed with interior details that make the spaces come alive, while the exteriors have stunning architectural detailing – whether it's the masonry on a chimney or a trellis blooming with flowers.

LEGO Friends has remained consistent over the years, telling a range of stories from across Heartlake City, but the sets are easy to display together as they share the same vibrant aesthetic. As for the longer running theme, City is jetting off to space one year and exploring the jungle in the next.

Friends has created a niche that sticks to everyday living but in a colourful way. Heartlake City is almost a utopia where even the sidewalks are multicoloured and the baked goods are always fresh. There's a feel-good atmosphere because it champions friendship, teamwork and community. While exploring outer space is cool, LEGO Friends can remind us that it's the little things in life that are the most important.

KAT-REES JAUKE

Ryan says...

"City deserves a lot of credit, hosting all of these adventure subthemes that need a home."

What do volcanoes, jungles, swamps and space have in common? They've all had their chance to shine as LEGO City subthemes — and those are in addition to the frequent appearance of arctic inspired subthemes. Point is, LEGO City has a habit of stretching the definition of 'city'. That disappoints a lot of fans looking to the theme to populate their real world LEGO layouts, forcing them to turn to other themes — Friends being a major competitor in terms of providing actual city-focused sets.

But is the wacky lineup really that detrimental to LEGO City? Contrary to what I've thought of the theme for a while, I'd say no.

LEGO City as a theme to build up a LEGO city isn't great, I will admit. But what the theme does well is provide a wide variety of sets to fill out a LEGO world that other themes just don't offer. This is doubly true when you consider the sharp decline in original themes like Power Miners and Aquazone; themes like those simply don't get made very often. So LEGO City steps in.

The theme might not go to the fantastical heights of something like Atlantis, but it does give such one-off waves a place to go. A bunch of submarines and heavy ocean machinery might not help build a downtown, but they do add a unique flair to a LEGO world that otherwise wouldn't exist.

It's a lot easier to take something like Arctic Exploration and bundle it into LEGO City than it is to create, market and shelve a separate theme just for a year or two.

And City does still have city-based sets — 60422 Seaside Harbour with Cargo Ship is a great addition to a city layout, as is 60423 Downtown Streetcar and Station. They do get drowned out a little by the noise of the more out-there sets, yes, but they are still there if you're looking for them.

I do concede that when it comes to a theme made for building up a LEGO city, Friends has City beat (as do Creator and Icons). But as a theme, City deserves a lot of credit, hosting all of these adventure subthemes that need a home, whether they be extreme sports or mining expeditions. The sets are still fun and make for great mini displays in a wider collection, even if they perhaps don't fit the everyday life label all that well.

RYAN EVERLETH

BLOCKS BOOK OF
RETRO LEGO SETS **VOLUME 2**,
THE **PERFECT PRESENT!**

Blocks
BOOK OF
RETRO
LEGO SETS
VOLUME II
BLOCKS SPECIAL // £10.99 // $17.99
46

WWW.**BLOCKSMAG.COM/SHOP**

What's new at bricklink

What is BDP?

BrickLink Designer Program is a way for fans to turn their builds into official LEGO sets. Each year, 15 fan-designed models will be available to pre-order as part of a very limited production run. Sets are limited to 30,000 copies per design.

BDP SERIES 7 SETS UNVEILED

Five varied fan creations covering sushi, sailing and sorcery are going to be available for pre-order in this upcoming BDP series

Five BrickLink Designer Program sets have been revealed for Series 7 and for the first time in forever there isn't a Castle inspired model in sight. Instead, there are witchy potions, robotic engineering and somewhere to grab sushi. Series 7 models will available to pre-order from February 2026

Sushi Restaurant is a quaint store that is based on traditional Japanese architecture, featuring shoji screens, gabled rooftops and the distinctive pink flowers of a cherry blossom. The set includes a cream coloured romendensha – a Japanese streetcar.

"We've got some tasty teas warmed up on our cool Japanese charcoal fireplace, called irori," promises the builder who goes by Brickproject, the creator of this culturally specific model.

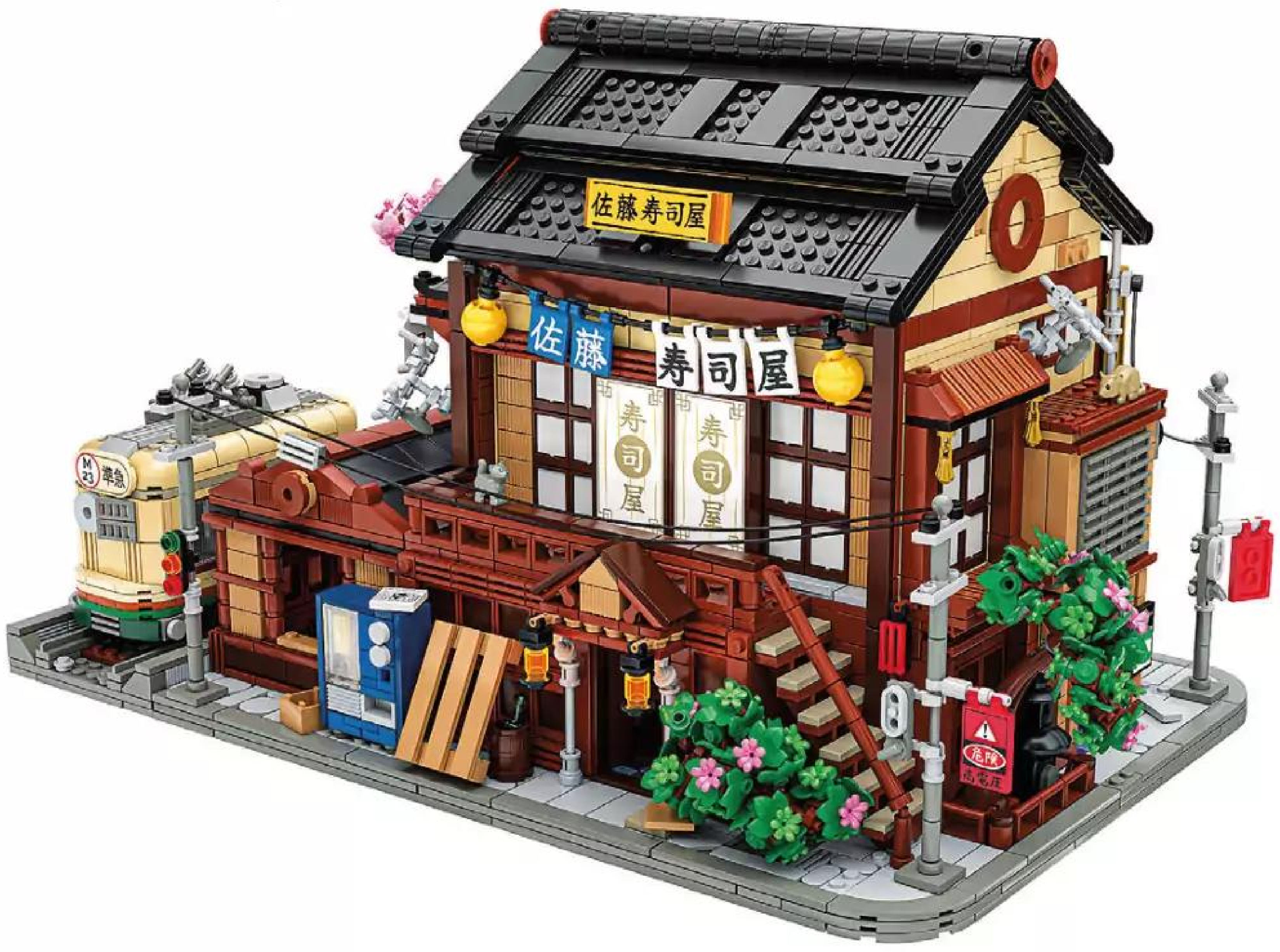
There are also brews to be found in the Alchemist's Shop, which has a potion bottle incorporated into its roof. Nestled in a forest setting, this model oozes fantasy vibes. A modular design means that each floor of the shop can easily be removed to access the hidden bookshelf for secret recipes and a collection of coloured vials. The build also includes a travelling cart for when the alchemist wants to sell their wares on the road.

Knickknacks and treasures are found in another Series 7 set – Antique Collection, which ingeniously uses its 1,471 pieces to recreate an intricately designed display case filled with oddities. LEGO gemstones, keys, minifigure and even pumpkin elements combine to create shelves full to the brim with trinkets. An accompanying armchair is provided to suggest someone sitting and admiring the collection.

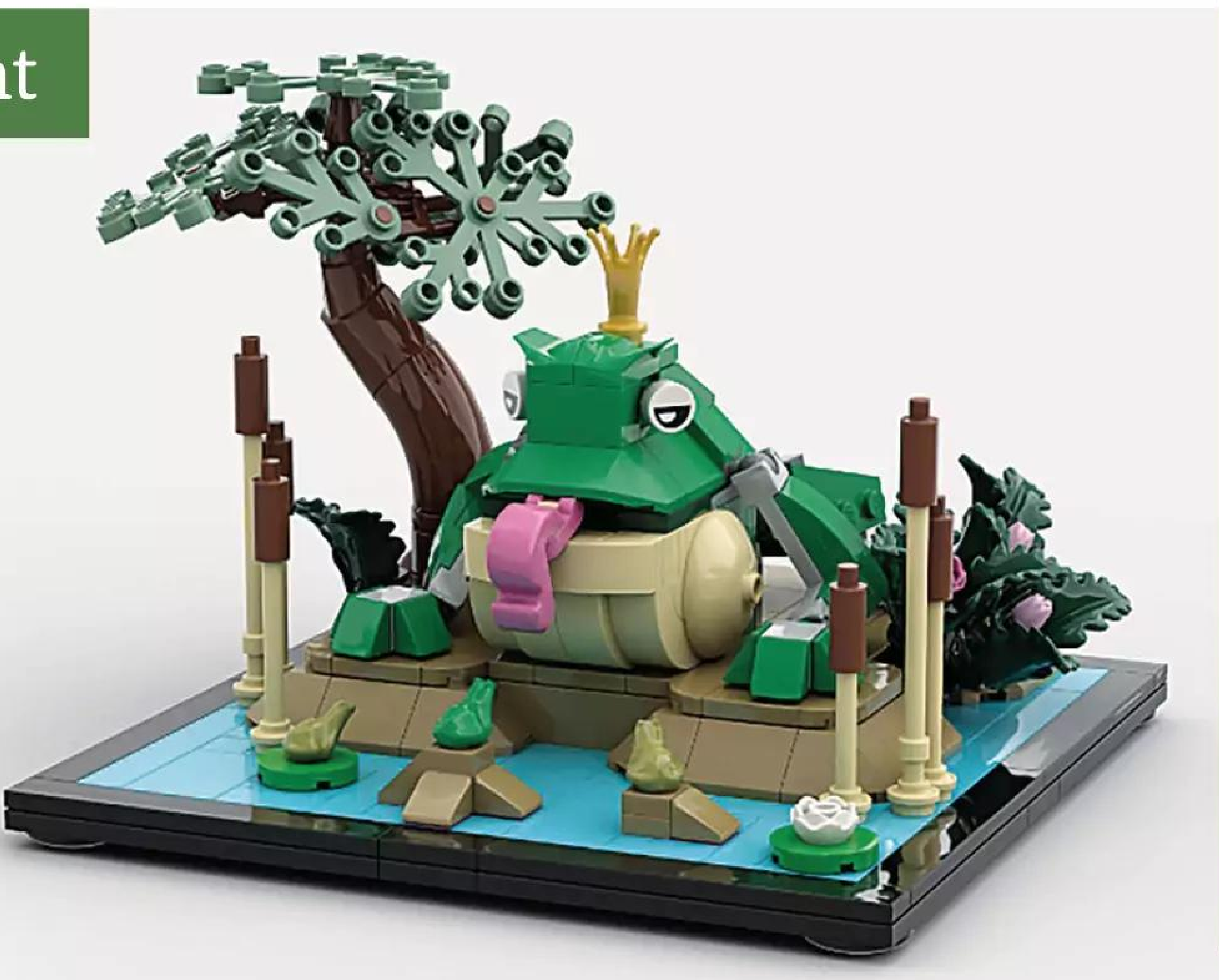
However, this wouldn't be a BrickLink Designer Program series without something inspired by a classic LEGO theme. Privateer Frigate Fortuna brings a new faction to the world of Pirates – privateers. They can be aligned with any faction, depending on who has more doubloons. The fan designer known as BrickPerfection has tried to make this ship as historically accurate as possible in 4,000 pieces, with the frigate boasting 20 cannons and a cat to fight off any pesky rats who want to nibble on the rations.

The final set is W.A.L.T. The Little Robot. Designed to be a desk buddy, he features 16 points of articulation for capturing a range of poses, as well as six alternate faces if you want him to match your mood. Whether you are happy, tired or angry, W.A.L.T. can empathise. The model also comes with a blank face option to customise into whatever expression you want. "I've had a lot of fun designing this lovely little robot," says fan designer Leewan. "I hope you will like it and want to have one in your home."

KAT REES-JAUKE



Build Spotlight



Margoulique has designed a fairytale character that's presiding over the swamps in this diorama. With only a few pieces, the majestic frog is instantly recognisable and ingeniously uses a pony tail element for his long tongue. Little LEGO frogs gather round on lily pads to pay respect to their amphibian king in his shiny golden crown.

Important dates

July 2025
Series 4 sets start shipping

October 2025
Series 5 sets start shipping

October 6, 2025
Series 6 sets open for pre-order

February 1, 2026
Series 7 open for pre-order

March 2026
Series 6 sets start shipping

July 2026
Series 7 sets start shipping

Better than gold?

Matt Chiles shares his wisdom from the block market floor, cutting through the many myths around investing in and reselling LEGO sets

I find it odd how perfectly rational LEGO fans get dollar signs in their eyes when they need to part with their surplus LEGO bricks. Yes, I'm talking to you… and I am guilty of it, too.

If you are reading this magazine, the chances are good that you fall into the category of having more LEGO boxes than you need. It may be new sets that you acquired multiple copies of, maybe it is an old used set from when you were a child, perhaps you picked up a set you didn't really need just because it was cheap at a garage sale.

For me, some of my surplus sets have come from 'upgrading' my old Classic Space sets from my extremely yellowed originals to ones that still look good today. In my fervor to snag better sets I have been know to re-upgrade sets that I had already upgraded once before. There have been times when I have come across one at a dealer's table while at a LEGO convention and couldn't pass it up… oops.

Well, who doesn't need multiple copies of 6850 Futuron Auxiliary Patroller from 1989? Me, that's who. One copy is sufficient – but for reasons, I have two.

Many people decide that they don't want to sell on BrickLink (it can take forever, listing and shipping is a pain). They don't want to sell on eBay (they charge a fortune, listing and shipping is a pain). They don't want to go to their local LEGO brick reseller (they pay way too little). The next easy option is to sell to their friends through their local LEGO user group.

I have been in several such clubs over the years and have seen a lot of such sales. They typically go something like this: "I need to downsize my collection because [insert excuse about not enough space, a move to another city, an unhappy significant other or cool new sets coming out] and I wanted to give all of you first dibs because I love you so much. I have priced them at low BrickLink prices. I have the following sets for sale…" …they then include a long list.

Well, frankly, if you wanted to buy the set in question, you would have already gone to BrickLink and bought it at 'low BrickLink prices.' Why would I, your friend, want to buy your castoffs for regular prices? Or why would I, an investor/reseller, want to pay full price? Or why should you, a seller, think you can get top dollar whilst avoiding commissions, delays, listing headaches and shipping hassle?

My theory for how you should price things up in this scenario is as follows: go to eBay and see what the set in question is being offered for. You won't have to pay their fees, so knock off about 15%. You won't have to hassle with photos, boxing, shipping or potentially unhappy buyers, so knock off another 15%. That is about a 30% discount from eBay. I would use a similar methodology if I wanted to compare with BrickLink prices instead and end up at least 20% below BrickLink.

At this point you will still be way ahead versus selling at deep discount to your local brick-and-mortar reseller. And it is unlikely you will be selling to folks who will flip it for a quick profit (but if they do, more power to them – if you had a venue to sell for that profit, you would do it too, but you don't). Perhaps most importantly, you will be passing on your sets to another builder or collector who will really value them and be grateful for the deal.

As for my 6850 – by the time you read this I expect to have sold it and a bunch of other old duplicates at the Bricks Cascade convention in Portland, Oregon, USA. I don't have a vendor table at the event, but this event allows trading between attendees – there is even a 'garage sale' scheduled one evening.

I'll test my own methodology to price the 6850… right now there are about 10 used 6850 sets for sale on eBay in my market (the US). The cheapest is $25 and the most expensive is $49. Mine is in the approximate condition of those in the $30 range. If I discount it by 30%, I will price it at $21.

Moving to BrickLink, there are nine used 6850 sets on sale at in my market. The cheapest is $16 and the most expensive is $126. Mine is in the approximate condition of those in the $26 range. If I discount it by 20%, I will charge $20.80.

In Oregon, I will ask for $20 for this set. I think it will sell for that price and someone will be happy to get it – and I'll be happy to get the full $20 quick and easy, without dealing with any online marketplaces. I'll let you all know how it goes…

Don't forget to play with your LEGO bricks.

MATT CHILES

6850
LEGOLAND
Building Toy
Jeu de Construction
LEGO
41 PCS

The information in this column about plastic bricks is not intended to constitute – and should not be construed as – investment advice.

The Lost Elements

Blocks delves into the many elements and products that the LEGO Group has designed but never released

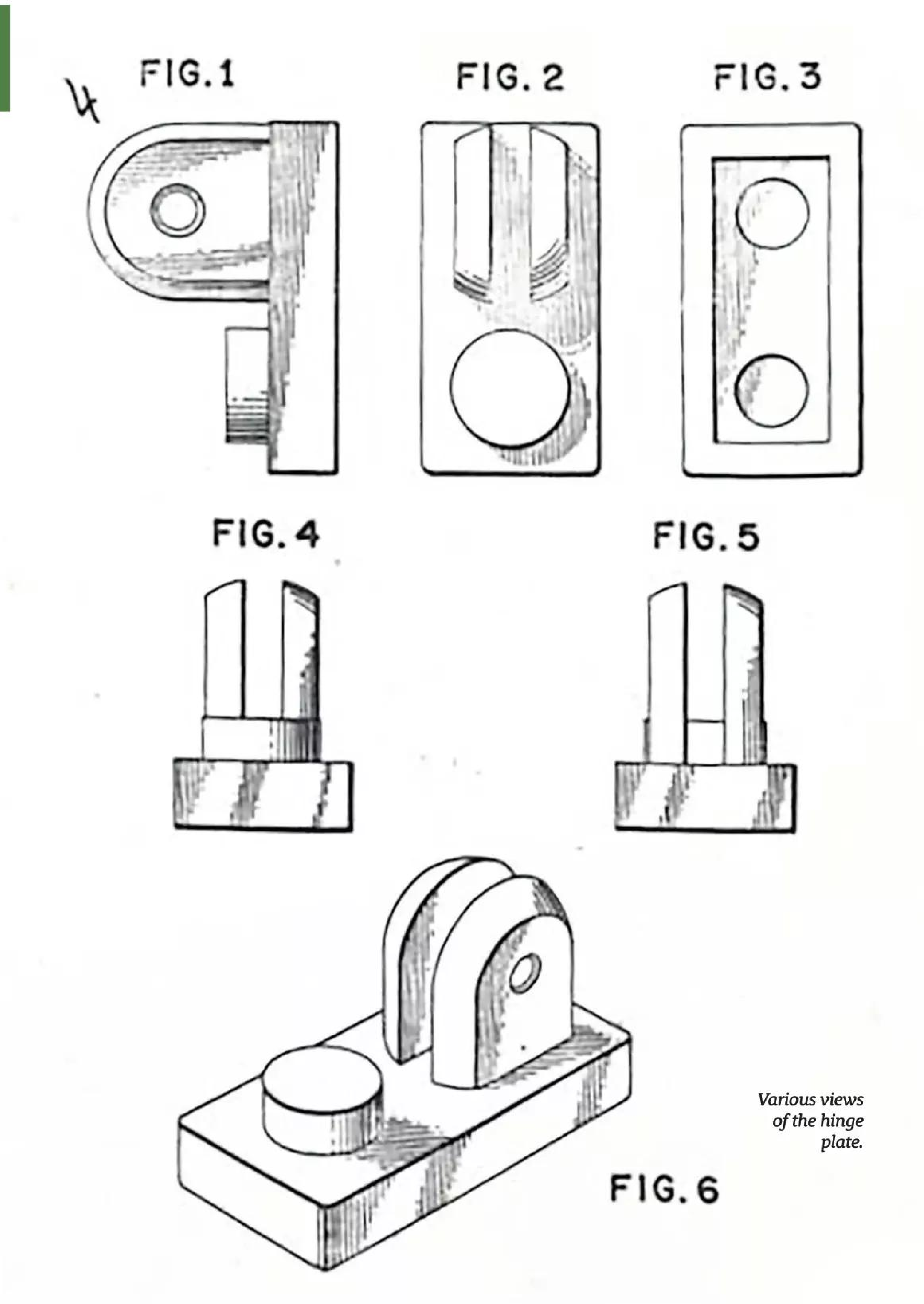
HINGE PLATE

In 1972, figures were top of mind at the LEGO Group. The Homemaker line was in development and the first LEGO people would be released two years later in 1974. In preparation, designers were experimenting and this element points to an interesting option that was explored but then abandoned. It would have given the first figures flexible legs.

Ultimately, to give the figures movement, LEGO designers created a family of parts with interlacing prongs that, when joined, form hinges that can move in multiple directions. These parts were created as limbs for the buildable Homemaker figures. Those figures use them only as arms, with regular LEGO bricks for legs, meaning that you have to build new legs to pose them in different ways.

This element would have had no use as any part of an arm or hand. There were no SNOT elements at this time, so it couldn't be mounted sideways as a shoulder. Furthermore, the placement of the hinge connectors is such that it wouldn't be viable as a hand. However, there is a perfectly logical use for this part – a foot. This almost certainly means that designers considered making legs flexible using the same type of hinges that were incorporated into arms.

As arms and legs are very different sizes and shapes in real life, this likely resulted in an alien looking figure and would have led to stability issues. That is probably why brick-built versions won out. Still, it is fascinating to know that the LEGO Group explored fully articulated figures with even more flexibility than minifigures.



Various views of the hinge plate.

LOCKING BEAMS

Technic beams grew organically out of the product line, beginning in the late 1980s and then continuing through the 1990s. In 1992 designers created a variant known as lift arms that had a unique property – two of them could lock into place across a wide variety of angles.

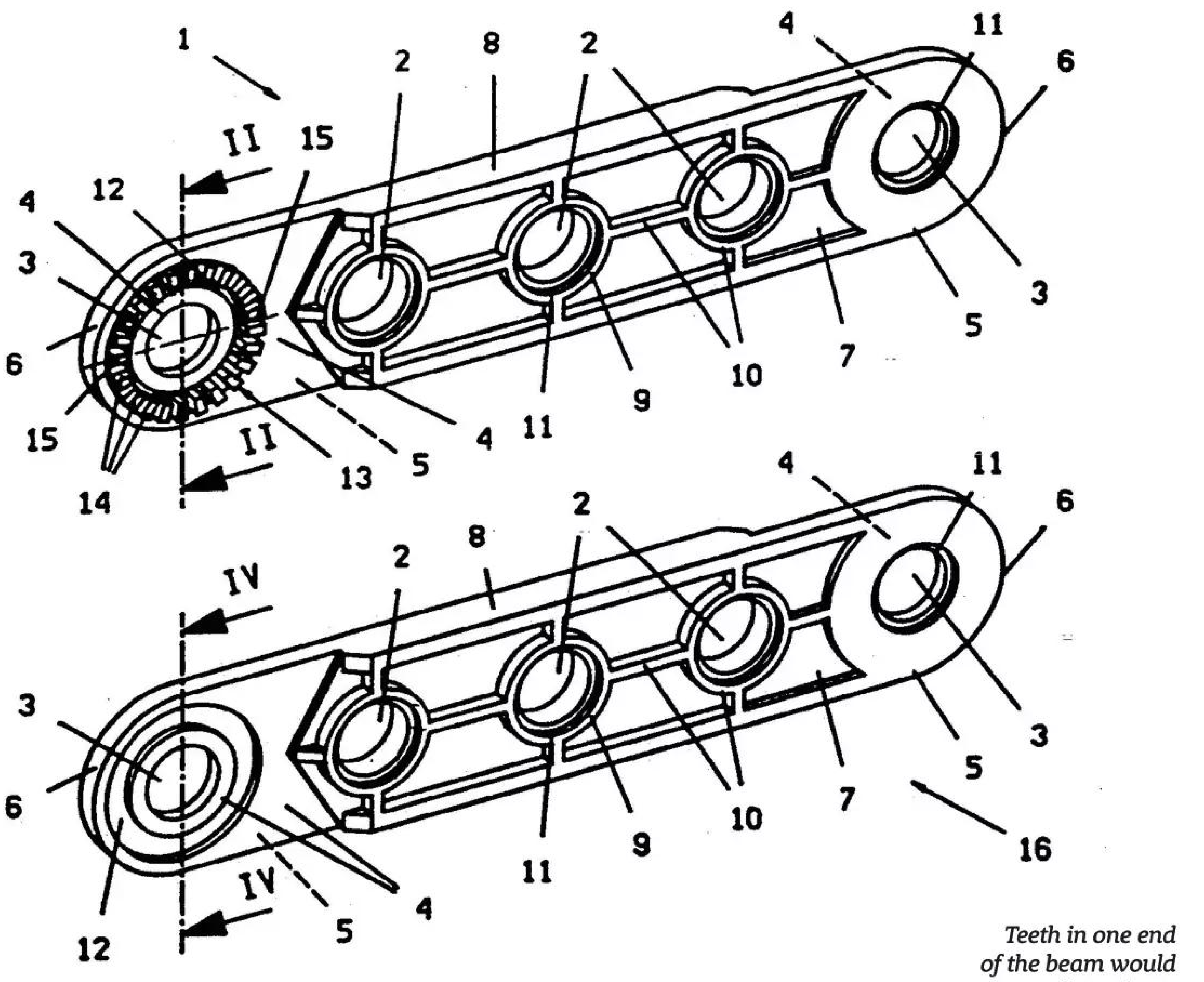
This functionality was facilitated by the presence of tiny teeth around the edges of pin holes, something that older Technic parts often incorporated. These have long since been abandoned, but for almost two decades a variety of Technic elements included this feature. Such teeth, when joined or nested, created an especially tight lock between two parts and prevented rotation at pinned connections. This element would have introduced that functionality into early beams, long before that class of parts became commonplace.

What makes this part stand out is the lack of studs. Technic did produce several lengths of plates with rounded edges that had these teeth at their ends. These beams, however, don't have any studs and therefore would have been a completely new type of element had they been made back in 1992. Designers were trying to create a part that would allow for rigid connections.

The patent then makes several references to building toys already on the market that facilitated construction by joining flat beams or rods suggesting this part, and others like it, were developed at least in part to compete with another toy product – possibly Erector sets.

Ultimately, this part may have been deemed too like the Technic plates with toothed ends that had been in production for at least a decade by this point.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Teeth in one end of the beam would have allowed two units to join.

In other news...

Rounding up the rest of the month's news from the world of LEGO bricks

VIETNAM FACTORY OPENS FOR BUSINESS

The LEGO Group's sixth factory has officially opened for business in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. Set to run on 100% renewable energy by 2026, LEGO Manufacturing Vietnam will be the LEGO Group's most sustainable factory to date thanks to its 12,400 rooftop solar panels. All five of the new buildings are LEED certified and the factory will be the first to use paper bags in every set it produces. The grand opening was quite the occasion, with the LEGO Group CEO Niels B. Christiansen and Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam Mai Văn Chính in attendance.

BUILDING A NATIONAL ICON

Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. is hoping to soon become the home of the world's largest LEGO cathedral model. Aiming to recreate the National Cathedral in LEGO bricks, the project has been ongoing since 2019 and is currently sitting at 125,000 total pieces. It's an impressive number, though less than half of the estimated 500,000 bricks needed to complete the build — which is expected to be more than 2.4 metres (8 feet) tall. The design of the gargantuan model is spearheaded by Portuguese builder Romão Santos, who sends the designs digitally to D.C. where they're rebuilt with physical bricks.

CRUISING TO A WORLD RECORD

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS
MSC WORLD AMERICA

MSC Cruises has set a rather fitting world record to celebrate the launch of its newest flagship, MSC World America, achieving the Guinness World Record for building the longest line of LEGO ships. More than 1,000 crew worked to build and place LEGO ships along one of the ship's decks, which ended up spanning 88 metres (291 feet), building them and getting them in place in a mere two hours. And this isn't the last time MSC World America and LEGO bricks will team up, as the ship will offer a variety of LEGO events as it cruises along the sea.

DISAPPEARING DIVERSITY REPORTING

Danish journalist Iben Schmidt accused the LEGO Group of removing references to diversity and inclusion in its 2024 sustainability report when compared to the report from 2023. "I discovered that words like LGBTQ, 'people of colour', 'woman' and 'diversity' had completely disappeared," Iben said. This comes after the United States government has expressed its displeasure and legislated against diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, leading to speculation that the LEGO Group removed references to related terms to avoid a confrontation. The LEGO Group later released a statement in support of diversity and inclusion, though such references are still missing from the sustainability report.

A HOMEGROWN EXHIBITION

Many teenagers find themselves stepping away from LEGO building, but that couldn't be further from the experience of Mason Martin of Evergreen, Colorado, USA. When required to assemble a culminating project for his high school graduation, he decided to turn to his love of LEGO bricks and organise an exhibition to share his builds with his community. With 50 custom models ready for display, Mason coordinated with his local arts centre to make the exhibition a reality. "It was a big whirlwind of a bunch of things to do really quickly, all the time," Mason said. "But it came together. And seeing it now is fantastic."

RYAN EVERLETH

LATEST FROM LEGO HOUSE

Everything you need to know about the Home of the Brick, the destination in the heart of Billund

IN THE WORLD

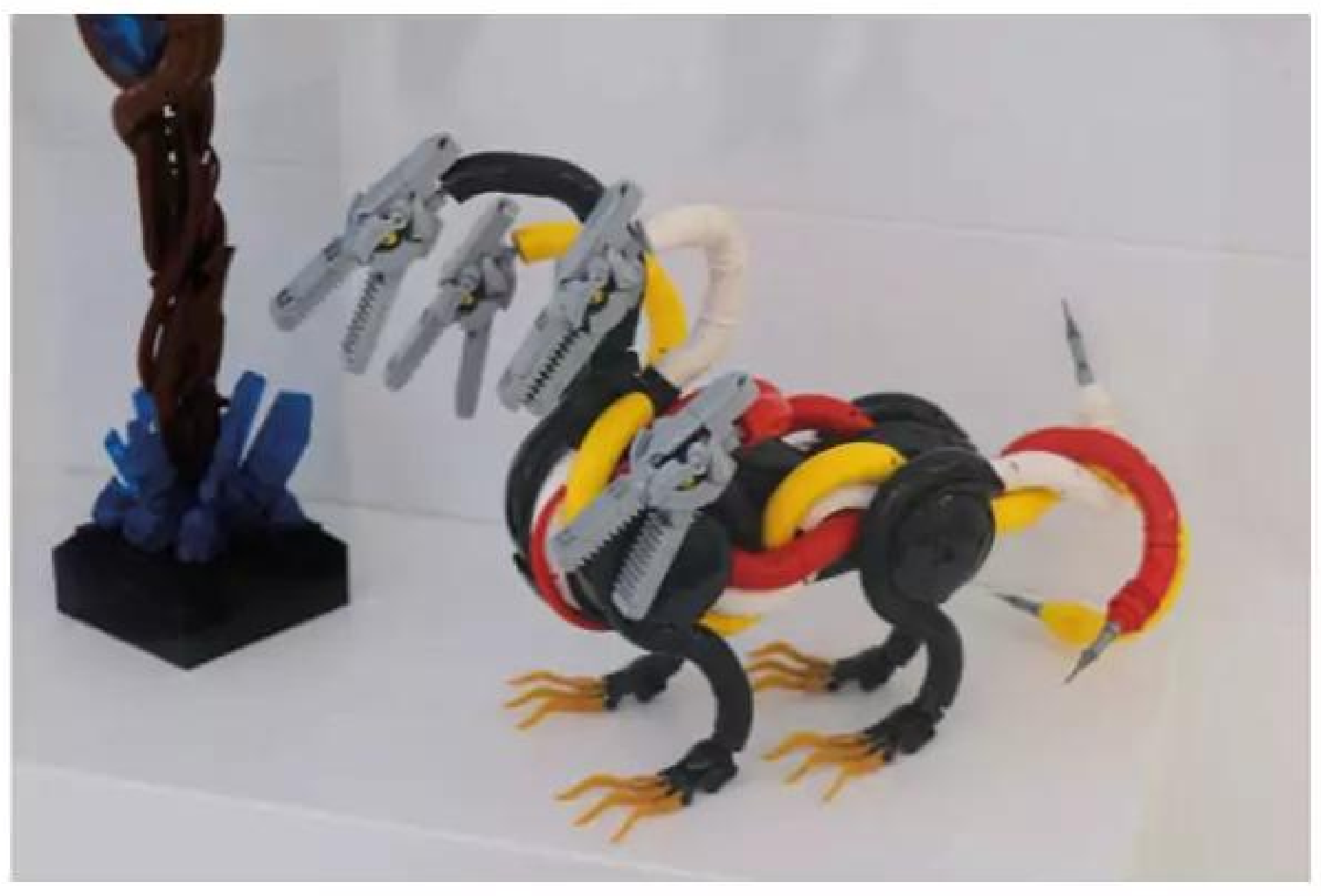
On August 8 1969, the Beatles walked across a zebra crossing for the cover of their record Abbey Road, named for the recording studio where they laid down the album. If you looks closely in World Explorer, you'll find their minifigure doppelgangers recreating that moment just ahead of a pizza delivery van.

MUSEUM FIND

LEGO SYSTEM
6761
FREE
Offre gratuite
7-12

Western – or Wild West as it was known in the US – is a theme full of exciting sets. One of the more unusual is 6761 Bandit's Secret Hide-Out, which builds a rickety looking hideout on top of an abandoned mine. It's tremendous fun, with a trip wire that triggers a cannon when the horse steps on it.

MASTERPIECE GALLERY



Nathan Don enjoys crafting supernatural animals with LEGO elements. This alligator clip hydra is a creepy mash-up of organic and mechanical design, with the coloured necks twisting around one another into the body. It's visually unusual and unorthodox – and really impressive.

EXPERIENCE SPOTLIGHT

The Forest of Dreams has taken over LEGO Square, with a special build activity in Creative Lab. LEGO House has worked with Play Ambassador Chen Fenwan, a paper cut artist, on the experience, who has reimagined her delicate craft in LEGO brick form to showcase the possibilities of creative expression.

WHAT'S NEW...

HOUSE
LEGO MASTERS
ACADEMY

LEGO Masters Academy will open at LEGO House in September. The experience space is a recreation of the US version of the popular television show's set. The space will be used to provide building tutorials to those who book the add-on offering, which is separate to the play zones within the House.

ON THE BRANCH

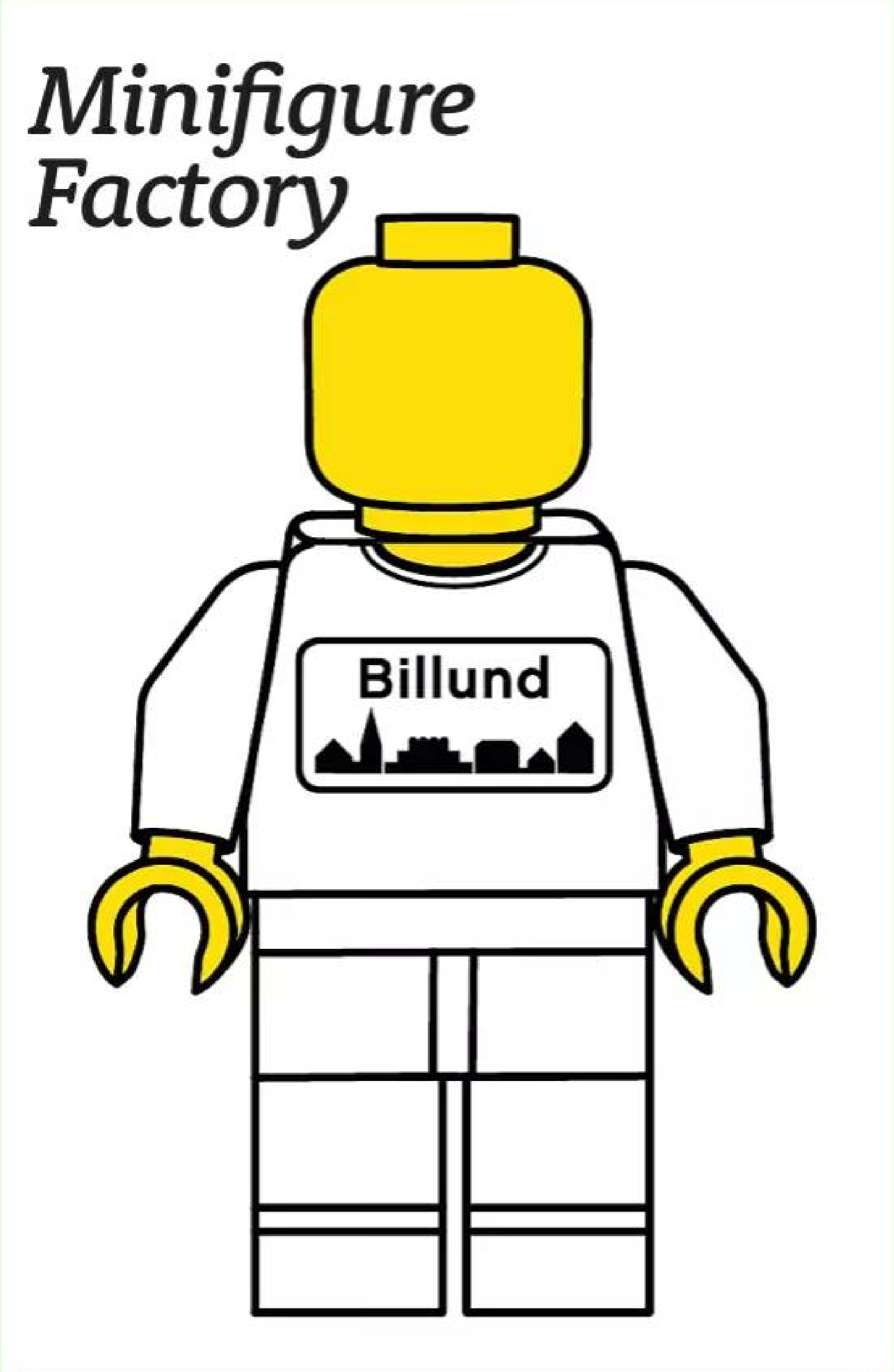
How would you like to get to your destination? You can travel by train, caravan, monorail, aeroplane or good old-fashioned car. If you make it to the vacation spot, there's a lovely holiday home to stay in... although there are many noisy modes of transport going by.

Upcoming events

Christmas
Winter season
Later this year, LEGO House will be transformed into a winter wonderland – as is traditional for the venue. There will be brick-built Christmas trees everywhere and special decorations. Fans can expect to find seasonal build activities in Red Zone, photo ops to snap a selfie with and new surprises for 2025.

Fan Tours
September 5, September 15,
October 6, November 7
A tour that gives fans a peek inside the LEGO Group. The one-day experience takes guests into the LEGO factory to see bricks being moulded, through the home of LEGO founder Ole Kirk Kristiansen and then on a guided tour of LEGO House. Special booking required, details at LEGO House website.

Brick Tour
September 2, October 9,
November 25, December 4
Have a guided tour of LEGO House from one of the experts who knows everything about the destination – from its Bjarke Ingels architecture to its playful purpose, before eating at Mini Chef restaurant. Then participate in an exclusive session with a professional LEGO designer for one hour. Special booking required, details at LEGO House website.



LEGO House has exclusive prints available at the store's Minifigure Factory, including this one featuring the Billund road sign.

Cullens of Surrey
REHOME & RELOVE AUCTION

Specialist Auctioneers of Playtime Past & Present

Brought & Sold

Contact Us Today – The Next Collector Awaits!

Quote: BLOCKS For Reduced Commission

WWW.CULLENSOFSURREY.CO.UK

NEW!
Limited edition Blocks 10th Anniversary LEGO brick!

Blocks 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

To mark 10 amazing years of bringing LEGO fans the very best in builds, news, and reviews, we're excited to introduce this exclusive, limited edition Blocks 10th Anniversary LEGO brick!

Whether you're a long-time subscriber or just discovering Blocks, this collectible piece is the perfect way to celebrate your passion for LEGO and our milestone.

Get yours now and be a part of our 10-year journey!

Visit blocksmag.com to find out more and to grab your limited-edition brick before they're all gone!

Magazine
Advertising works!

BACK TO THE SHIRE WITH LEGO LORD OF THE RINGS
Blocks
BUILDING, COLLECTING & CUSTOMISING YOUR LEGO
FORMULA 1
WIN!
WILLIAMS RACING FW14B LEGO SET
SPEED CHAMPIONS AND ICONS REVIEWS

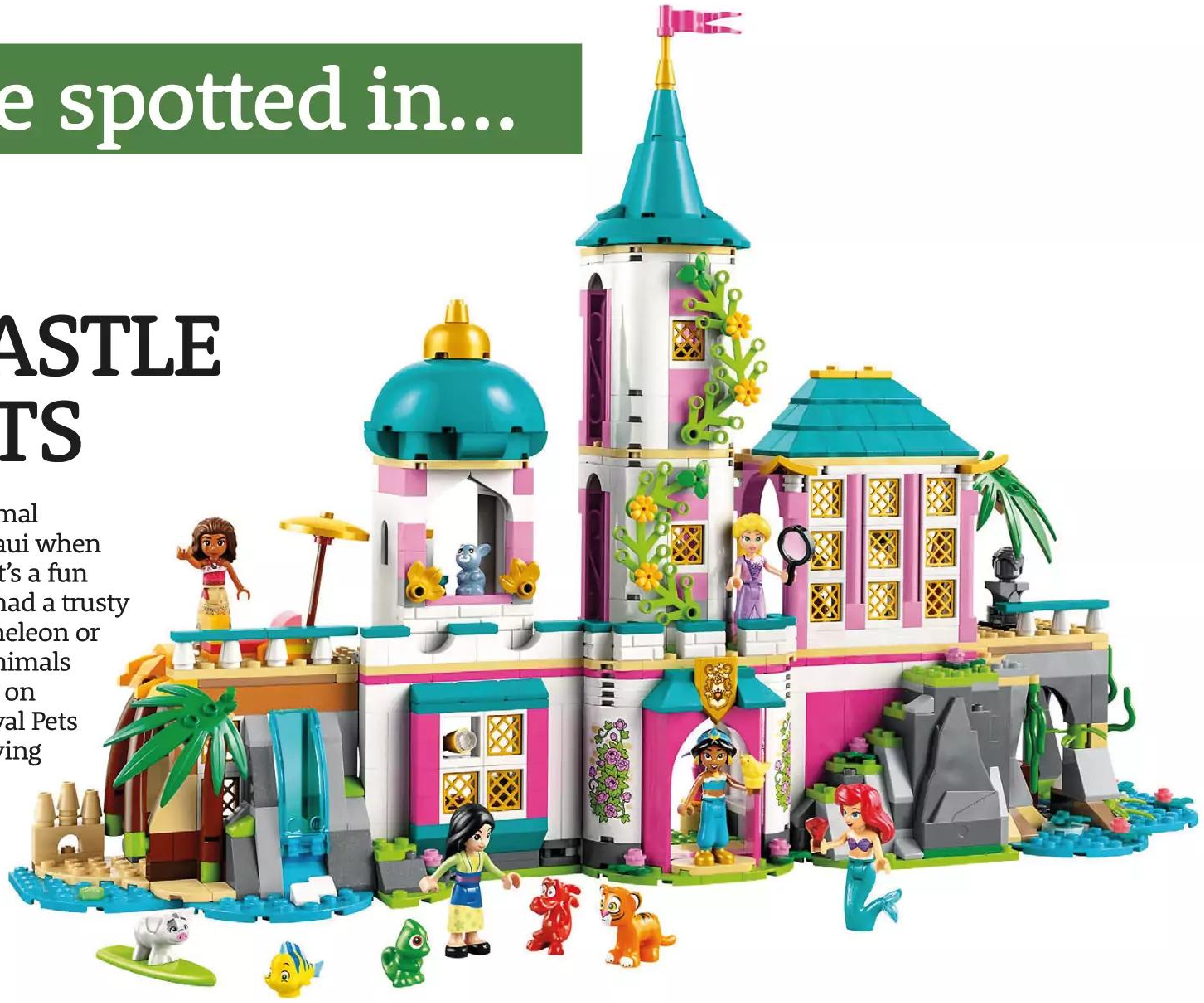
You've just **proved** the point by **reading** this...

To promote your products or services in front of a worldwide Blocks audience get in touch with...

Colin Smithson
+44 7590 196661
ads@blocksmag.com

Secrets we've spotted in...

43267 PRINCESS CASTLE & ROYAL PETS



'If you wear a dress, and have an animal sidekick, you're a princess,' jokes Maui when he first meets Moana and Hei Hei. It's a fun gag about how every Disney heroine has had a trusty animal sidekick, whether it's a sassy chameleon or a lucky cricket. Inspired by the different animals that have accompanied Disney princesses on their journeys, 43267 Princess Castle & Royal Pets is like a tropical vacation getaway after saving the world. It features beloved favourites such as Mushu and Pascal. Let's join the animal fun and prowl through the movie references...

A warm summer palace

With its sandy beaches and bridges arching over waterways, it seems like the overall design of this castle is inspired by Ariel's home on land in The Little Mermaid. That castle was based on Chillon Castle on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Built during the Middle Ages, it is one of the most visited castles in Europe and has attracted tourists for centuries, inspiring writers including Mary Shelley and Victor Hugo.

Tangled up in paints

It seems that playing with pets isn't the only thing the princesses are doing in this palace, as Rapunzel's tower room has a canvas for painting. It's a great reference to her actual tower from the fairytale and her obsession with hobbies in Tangled. Pink and purple colours combine into a lovely decal of the sun emblem that haunted her dreams for years and inspired her to take a leap into the wider world. She's also using the blue paintbrush element that was previously exclusive to 21333 Vincent Van Gogh – The Starry Night.

'I'm travel-sized for convenience'

Mulan has only previously featured in two other LEGO sets and while she had her lucky cricket, Cri Kee, in 43182 Mulan's Training Grounds, her ancestral guardian was noticeably absent. Mushu debuts in this set and looks absolutely fantastic. His new mould perfectly captures his serpentine body, with attention to detail for his scales and whiskers. Even though Chinese dragons should have five toes, his small figure still captures the overall aesthetic of these mighty beasts.

Travelling beyond the horizon

Now that Moana has saved her people – twice – she has earned herself a break and she's relaxing with what appears to be a fresh coconut. As Moana considered her future as leader of her people during the events of the first film, her parents pointed out the importance of coconuts in providing water, food and material for making things. It's a very small part of this set, with a LEGO ball element doubling as a coconut, but it's a really clever ode to that particular song.

Gadgets and gizmos aplenty

The palace is dedicated to comfy rooms and relaxing activities. It seems that Ariel had a big part to play in decorating pretty much all of it. There are references to her love of trinkets and odd knickknacks across the entire model, including what may be a marble statue of Eric, like the one she hugs in the movie. Amidst Aerial's many treasures, there are a few that reference other Disney characters, including the magic mirror from Snow White and the Severn Dwarfs.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Five things we've learned this month...

1

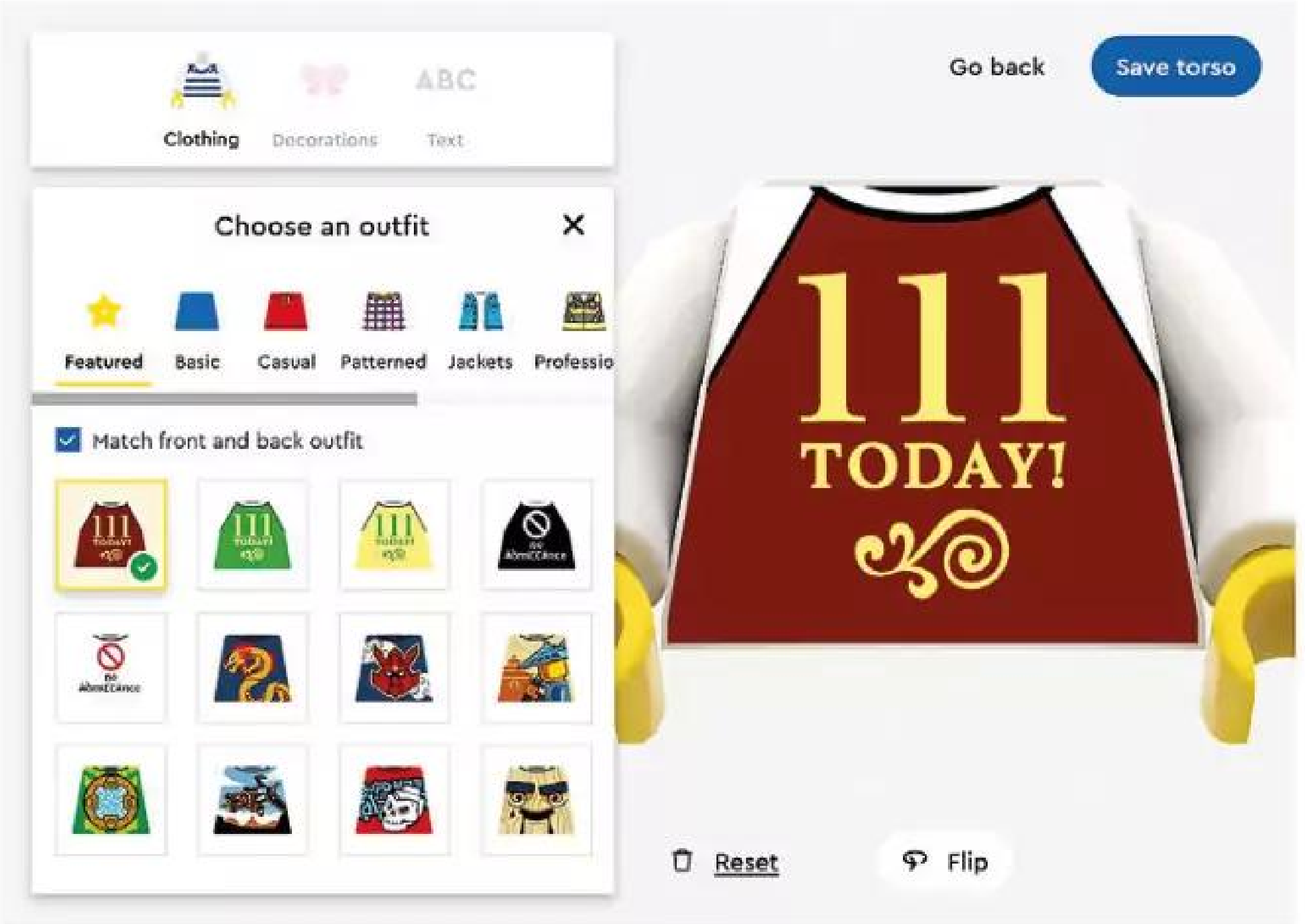
CHILDREN GROW UP FAST

In a world where entertainment is increasingly digital and children find themselves moving on from physical toys at an earlier age, the LEGO Group is eager to keep up. But that doesn't always mean just making products with a digital spin — partnerships with other brands are another crucial part of staying ahead of modern trends. "What's interesting for teens? We see, for instance, that sports is a super exciting thing," the LEGO Group's CEO Niels B. Christiansen recently stated. "And that's the reason why we've made strategic partnerships with Nike and Formula One. That's exactly what I mean when I talk about staying relevant with the brand and the portfolio."

2

IN-HOUSE VIDEO GAMES COMING

In line with the company's desire to stay relevant with the digital world, CEO Niels B. Christiansen also announced that the development of the LEGO Group's digital experiences will be coming in-house. "We will up our investments in digital play and video games and bring more of that in house, so that we will have our own resources under the LEGO brand," he said. Specific details about what this will result in aren't currently available, as the shift to more in house development is expected to take several years – but the goal remains to provide children with a mix of physical, digital and hybrid play experiences.



3

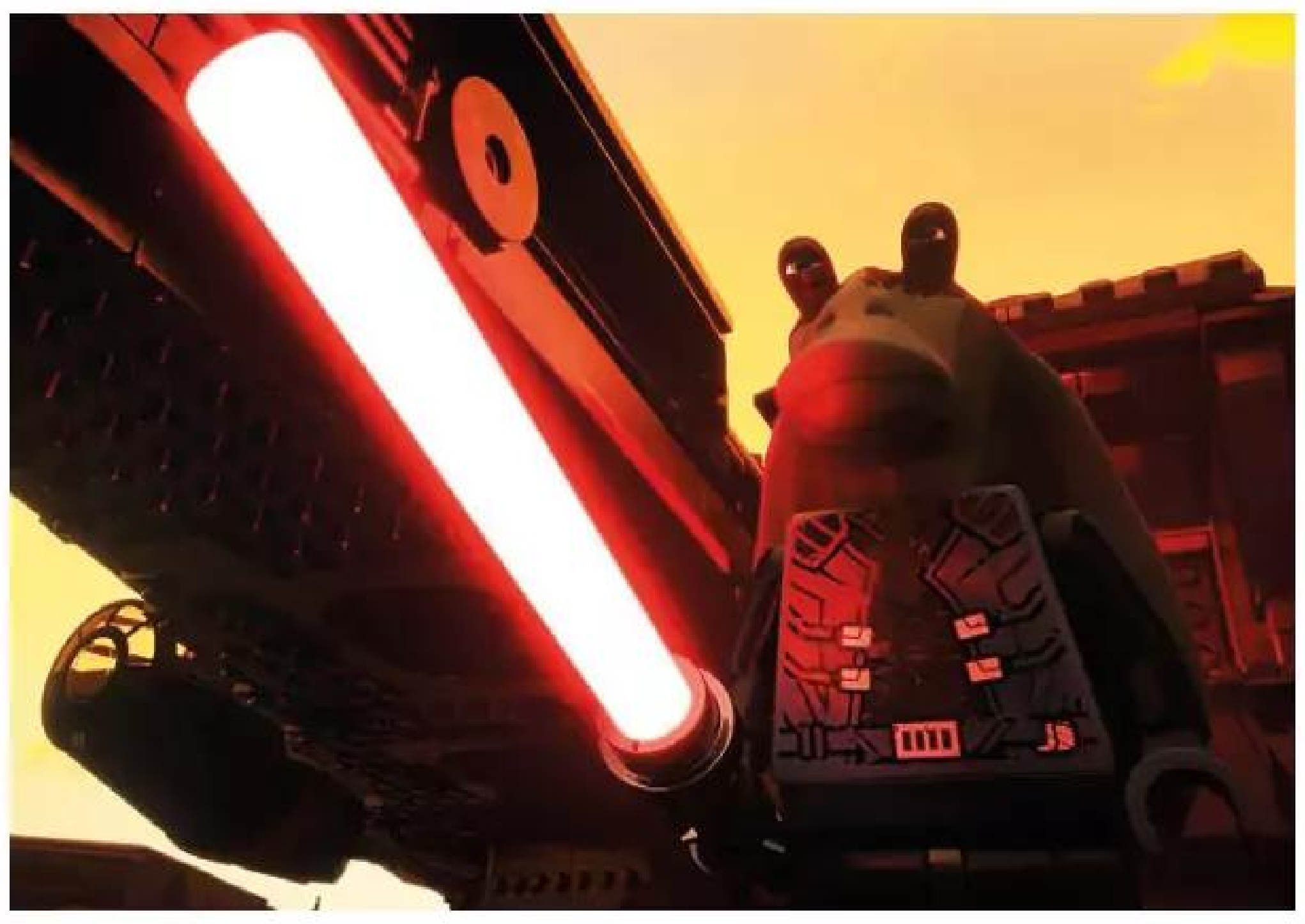
YOU CAN JOIN BILBO'S BASH

To coincide with the release of 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire, a handful of new minifigure torso designs based on Bilbo Baggins' 111th birthday party have been added to Minifigure Factory for a limited time. Fans have the option of two different designs for the front and back of the torso, available on a few different background colours. One celebrates Bilbo's remarkable age, while the other quotes the rather passive aggressive sign hung on Bag End's gate at the start of the film. These special torsos are limited to North America online and just a handful of LEGO Stores around the world.

4

AHMED WANTED DARTH JAR JAR

When Darth Jar Jar made his sinister appearance in LEGO Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy, it was a treat to more than just fans — Jar Jar actor Ahmed Best was thrilled to reprise his role as an evil and less clumsy version of the character, all while playing with of Star Wars fans' favourite theories. "I always wanted to explore this whole Darth Jar Jar thing," Ahmed said at Star Wars Celebration in April. "'I am the Phantom Menace, I've always been the Phantom Menace' was totally improved. It's something that I've been meaning to say for over 20 years."



5

CONCRETE BLOCKS GO TO COURT

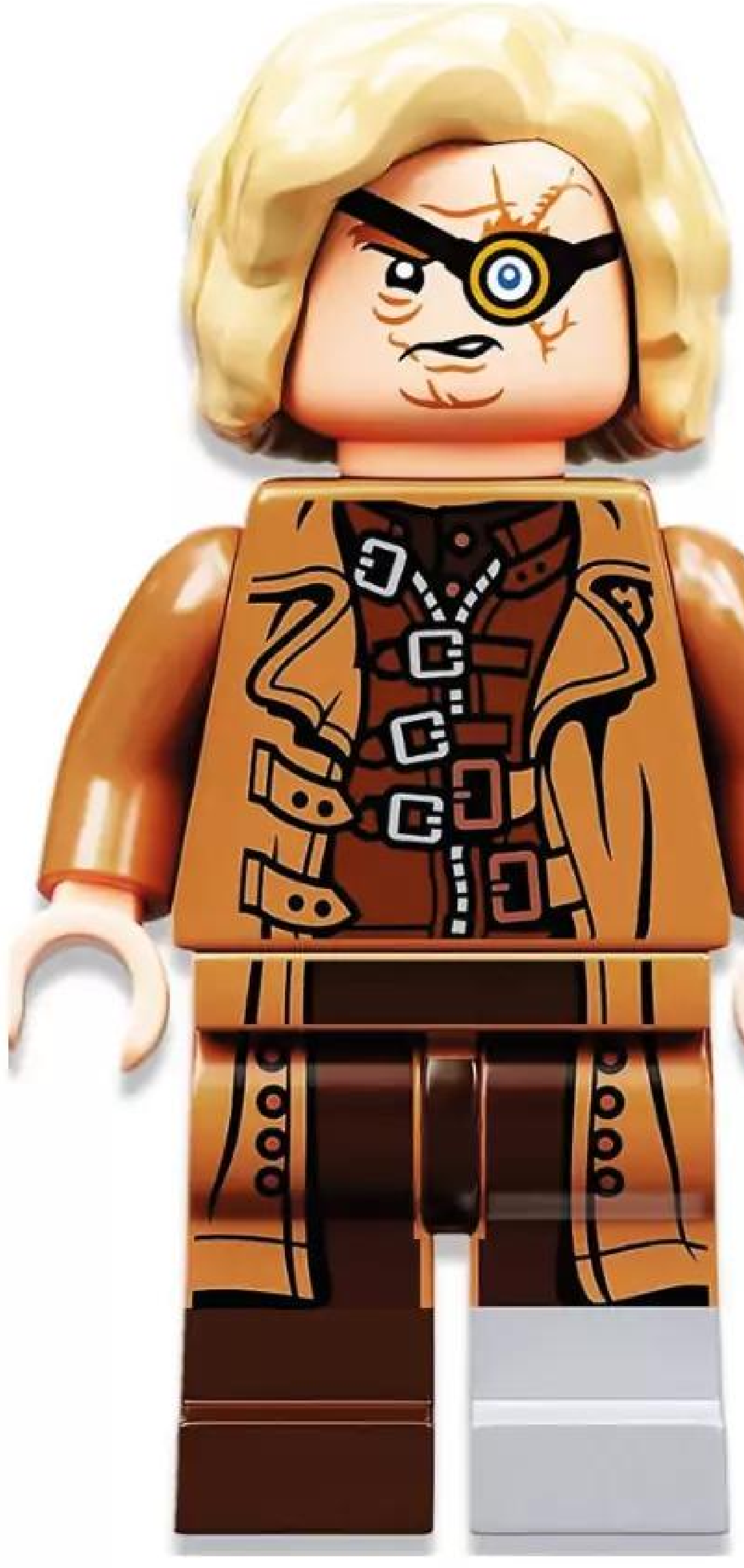
The LEGO Group filed a lawsuit against Dutch manufacturer Betonblock over the use of the term 'LEGO' to describe the company's anti-terrorism concrete blocks. The blocks function like LEGO bricks, stacking together to create protective barriers without being too unsightly. But what spurred the LEGO Group into action was Betonblock's use of the word 'LEGO' to market the blocks, citing damage to the brand that would lead to 'LEGO' being used as a generic term rather than solely referring to the LEGO Group's products. No verdict has yet been reached, but the LEGO Group has a strong track record of winning similar cases.

RYAN EVERLETH

Top 10

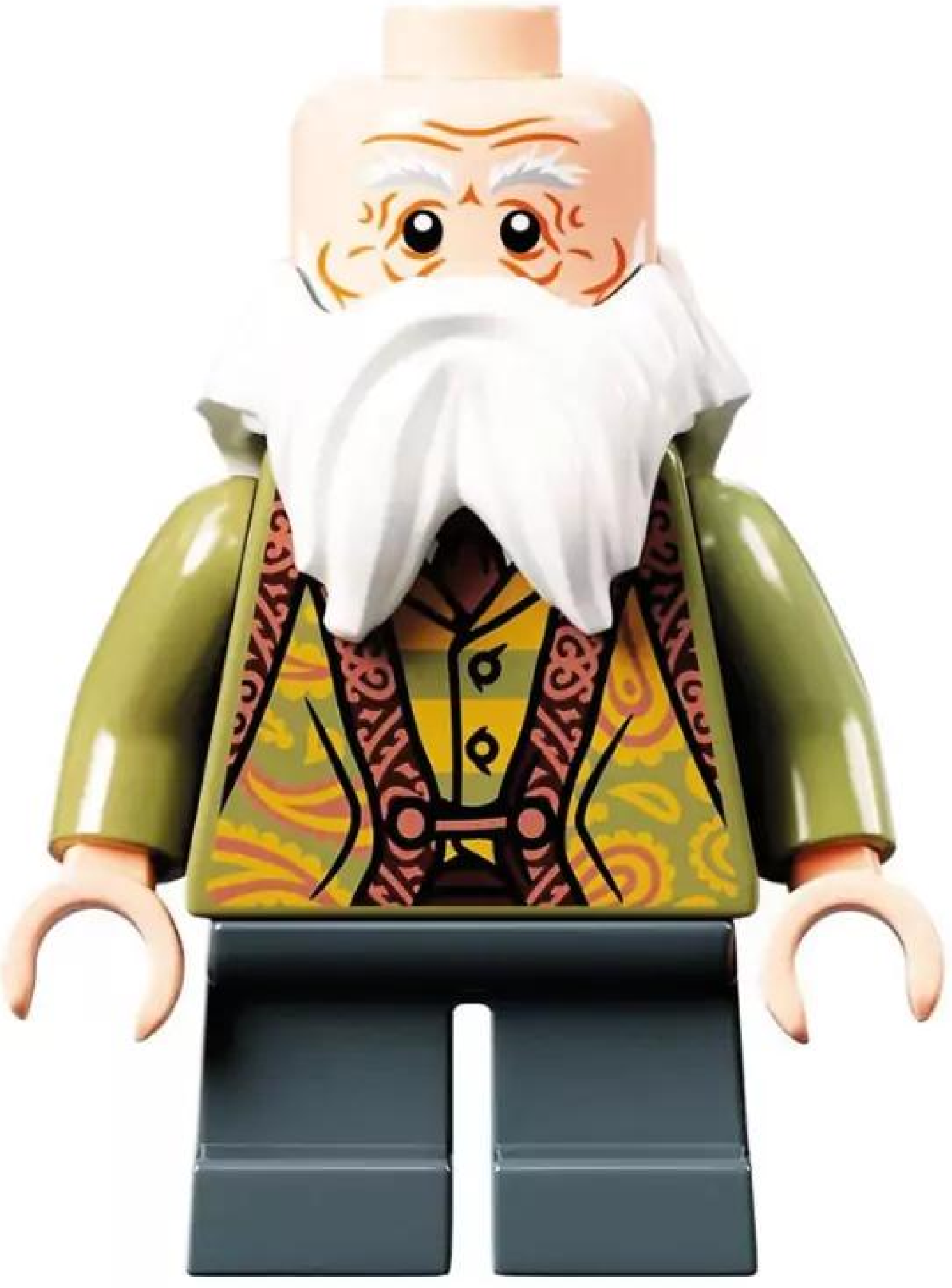
Hogwarts Faculty minifigures

The Hogwarts curriculum is varied and the same can be said about the school's faculty members



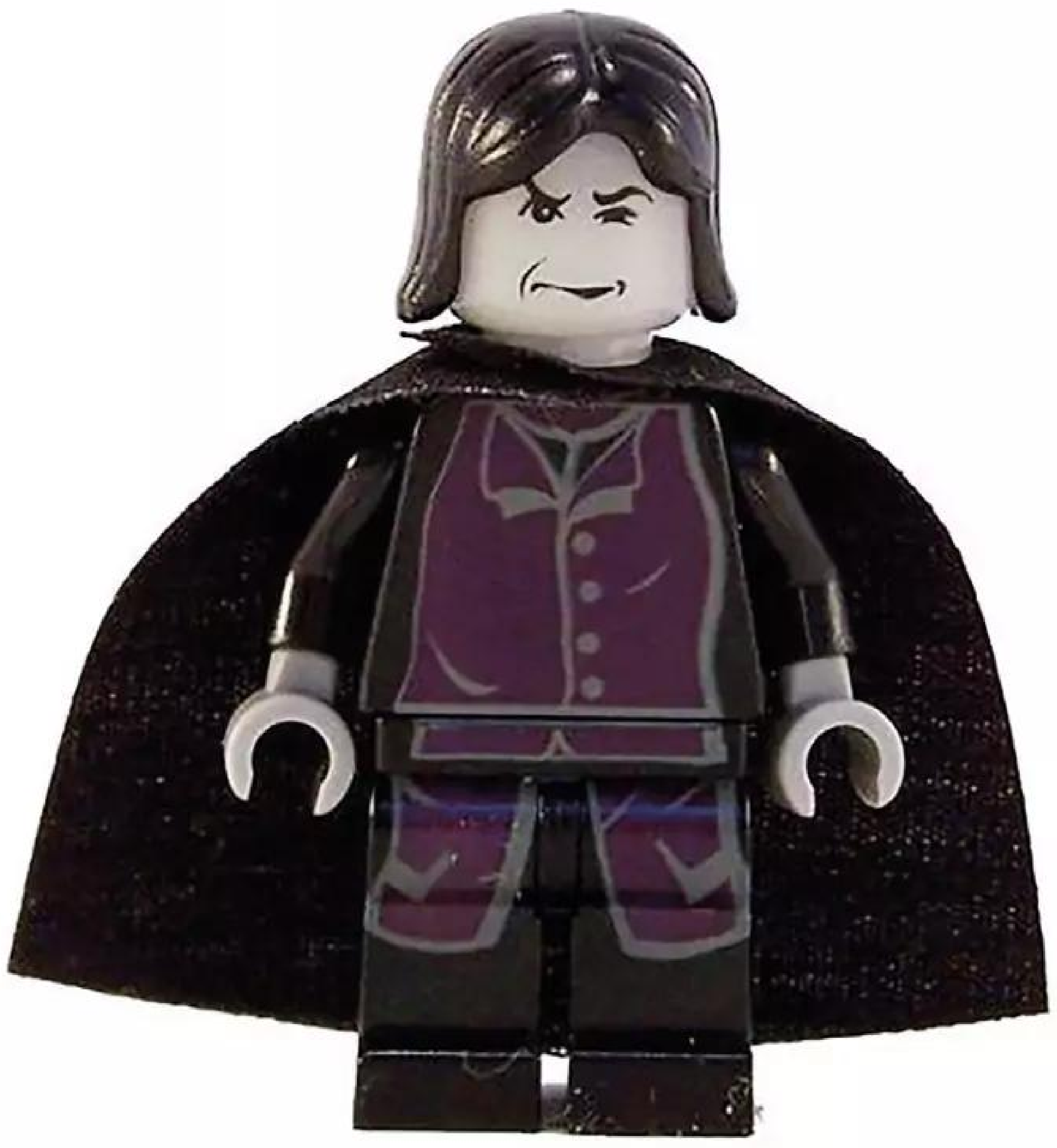
10. Mad-Eye Moody

There are plenty of eccentric details when it comes to Alastor 'Mad-Eye' Moody, from his battle scars through his peg leg to his magical left eye. But whilst the character plays a fairly key role throughout the Harry Potter series, he has only appeared formally in two sets. The figure that appeared in 76397 Hogwarts Moment: Defence Against the Dark Arts Class is pretty definitive, capturing many of the character's details with aplomb. Special mention goes to the dual-printed legs and the intricately detailed torso, which depicts Mad-Eye's trench coat.



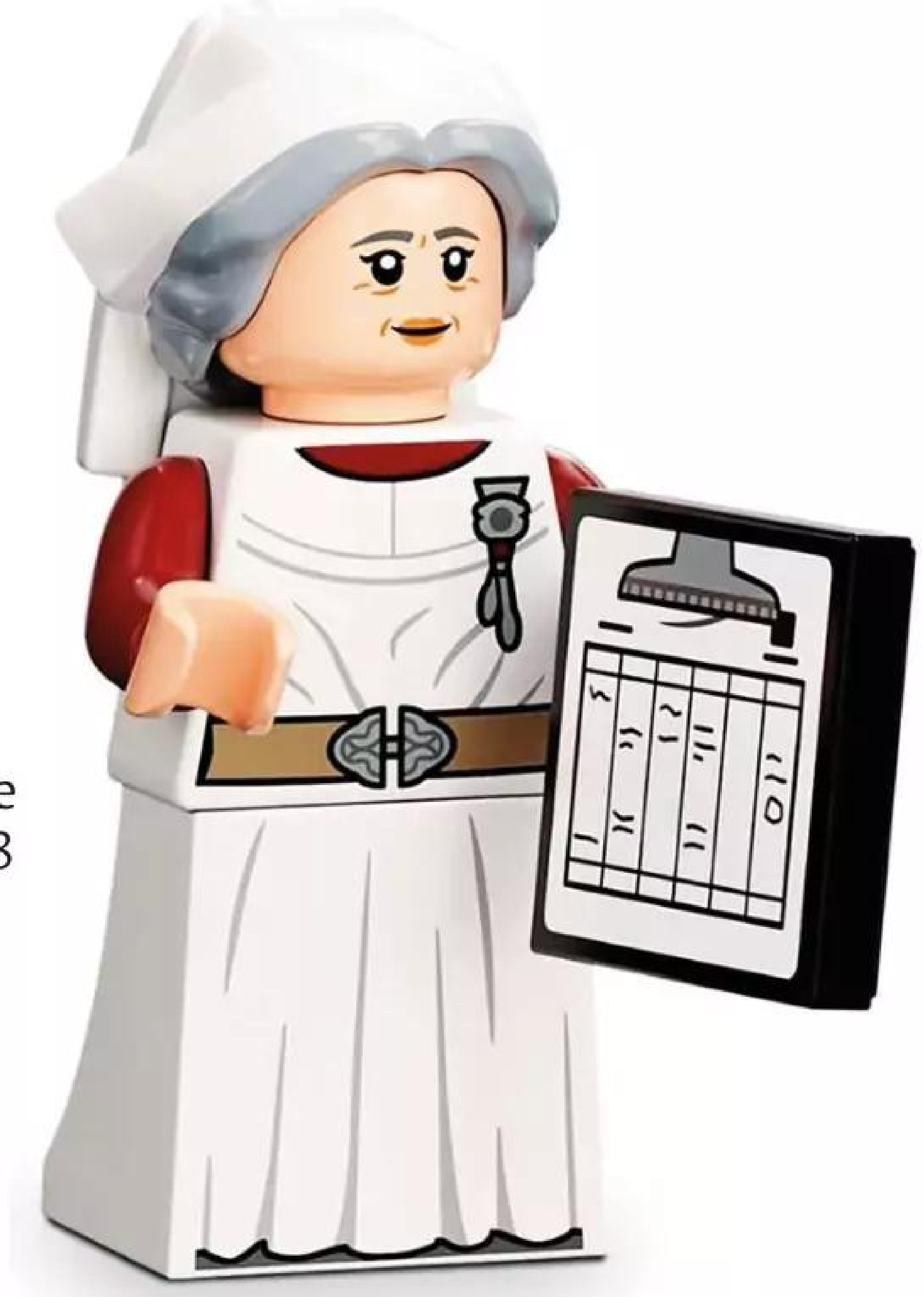
9. Filius Flitwick

The design and look of Filius Flitwick in the Harry Potter films changed mid-series from an older, wizened figure to a young, sprightly wizard. The former version lends itself to a more detailed figure, with the character's robes and white beard. Given the younger form became the accepted Flitwick look, it was a surprise when the older version turned up in 76385 Hogwarts Moment: Charms Class. Flitwick's stupendous beard is present and the olive robes look wonderful with the gold accented waistcoat. This Charms professor is very charming.



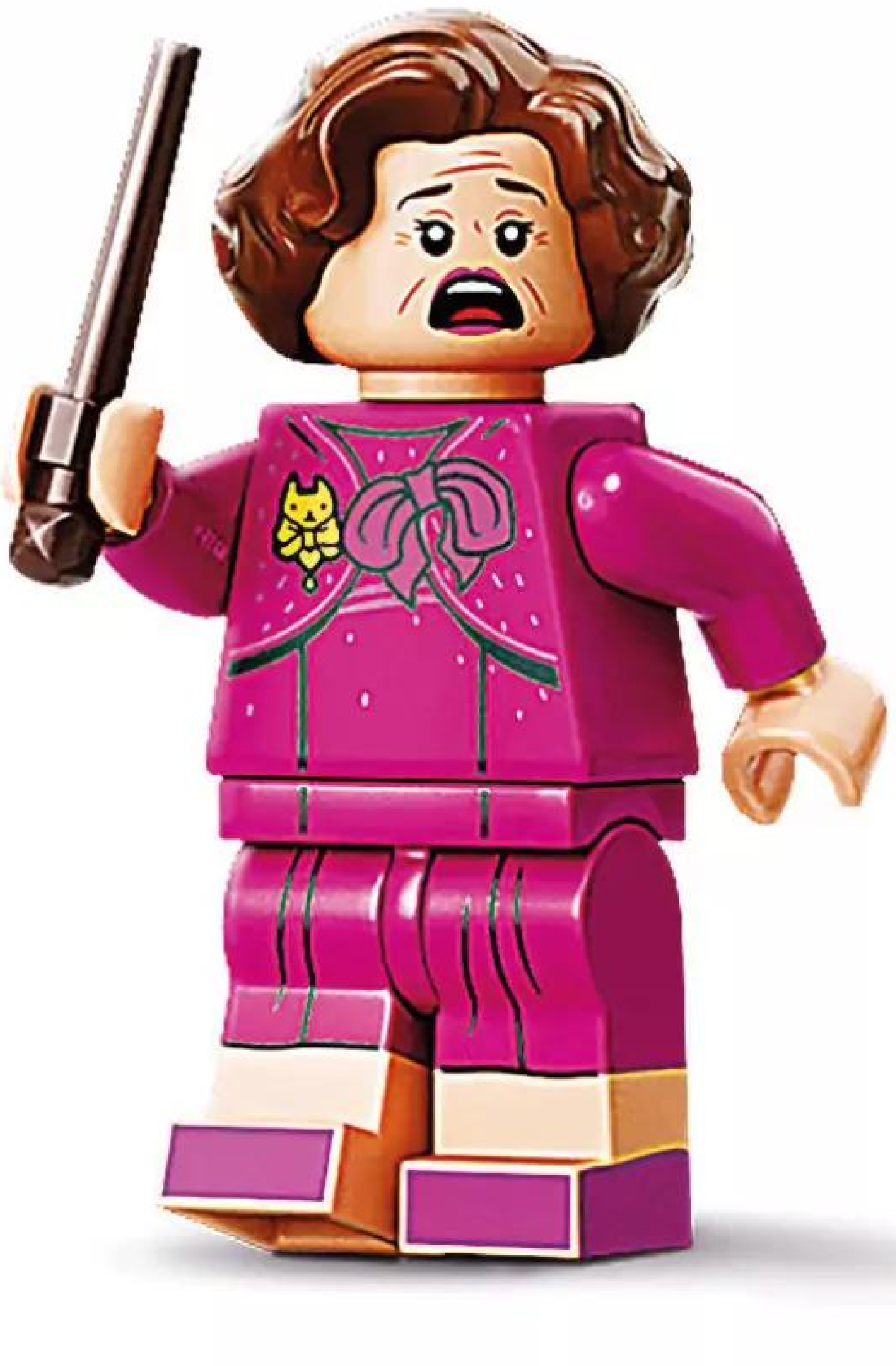
8. Severus Snape

Earlier minifigures might lack some of the detail seen today, but they also occasionally had fun with the source material. Case in point, the original Severus Snape minifigure from the first wave of LEGO Harry Potter sets has a glow-in-the-dark head. It doesn't really make sense, but it does suggest the character's pale complexion. The hair piece captures the character's oily locks and the dark robes are fairly detailed for the time, including some leg printing. Later minifigures have been more accurate, but for nostalgia and charm, this one easily makes the top ten.



7. Poppy Pomfrey

While the majority of the Hogwarts Faculty had been made in minifigure form before the Harry Potter theme was first cancelled, it was Poppy Pomfrey, the school matron, who fans wanted as a minifigure. Pomfrey appears throughout the Harry Potter series healing various students. In the films her look is inspired by British Victorian and Edwardian nurse uniforms, which was duly recreated in the character's first LEGO appearance in 76398 Hogwarts Hospital Wing. The red sleeves here offer a perfect contrast to Pomfrey's white uniform; also worthy of note is her dual-moulded headdress, which depicts both her grey hair and nurse's cap.



6. Dolores Umbridge

The character everyone loves to hate, Dolores Umbridge ranks highly in the Harry Potter franchise as the most memorable villain. Yes, there is Voldemort, but Umbridge's saccharine malice is unmatched and was beautifully captured by Imelda Staunton in the films. This minifigure, from 75967 Forbidden Forest: Umbridge's Encounter, was the first mainstream appearance of Umbridge in a LEGO set for 13 years and it certainly delivers. The slightly darker tone of pink on the character's (in)famous cardigan hints at her spiteful personality, but there's still some cutesy details like the cat brooch and the bow, which prove everything isn't always pretty in pink.

5. Sybill Trelawney

Professor Trelawney is the most eccentric of the Hogwarts faculty – as Divination professor, she spends as much time looking into the future as the present, leading to her detached persona. Compared to the stunning robes on this list, Trelawney is dressed in a comfortable cardigan in 76396 Hogwarts Moment: Divination Class. There are various levels of detail on the minifigure, from the gold circles on the cardigan to the silver charms on her undershirt. Trelawney's large eyes and frizzy hair are accurate – the minifigure is a complete vision (as it were) of cosy zaniness.

4. Pomona Sprout

Professor Sprout is the no-nonsense teacher of Herbology at Hogwarts – whilst this characterisation might be the result of the Miriam Margolyes's portrayal of the character in the Harry Potter films, in the books Sprout is equally forthright but kind. She has not appeared in many LEGO sets, this entry is from Collectible Minifigures Wizarding World Series 2 – this Sprout has some lovely details, especially her muddy robes, plus some earmuffs on the hat-and-hair headpiece to protect her from the Mandrake. There's some lovely printing on Sprout's torso too – it's a bloomingly beautiful minifigure.

3. Aurora Sinistra

Professor Sinistra has an interesting LEGO history – in the LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 video game, the character was retroactively identified with an as-then unnamed background extra in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone movie. The word 'minor' does not do justice to a character who has no lines in the book, yet the Professor of Astronomy's minifigure (from 76389 Hogwarts Chamber of Secrets) is beautiful – the reflective gold and brown robes compliment the character's skin tone. The subtle nature motif challenges Gilderoy Lockhart's status as best dressed professor. Few will know Aurora Sinistra's name, but they will certainly recognise her minifigure.

2. Albus Dumbledore

Whilst some characters on this list have only had one or two minifigures, Professor Dumbledore has had 15 since his LEGO debut in 2001. The newest is the best. Released in 76435 Hogwarts Castle Great Hall, this figure is from the Richard Harris era of Dumbledore (the Michael Gambon minifigures are never quite as good), capturing the character's calm, almost regal personality. The ruby robes are beautifully decorated with gold accents that are also printed on his arms. The long beard and hat and hair piece are also perfect. This won't be the last Dumbledore minifigure, but it's a tough one to beat.

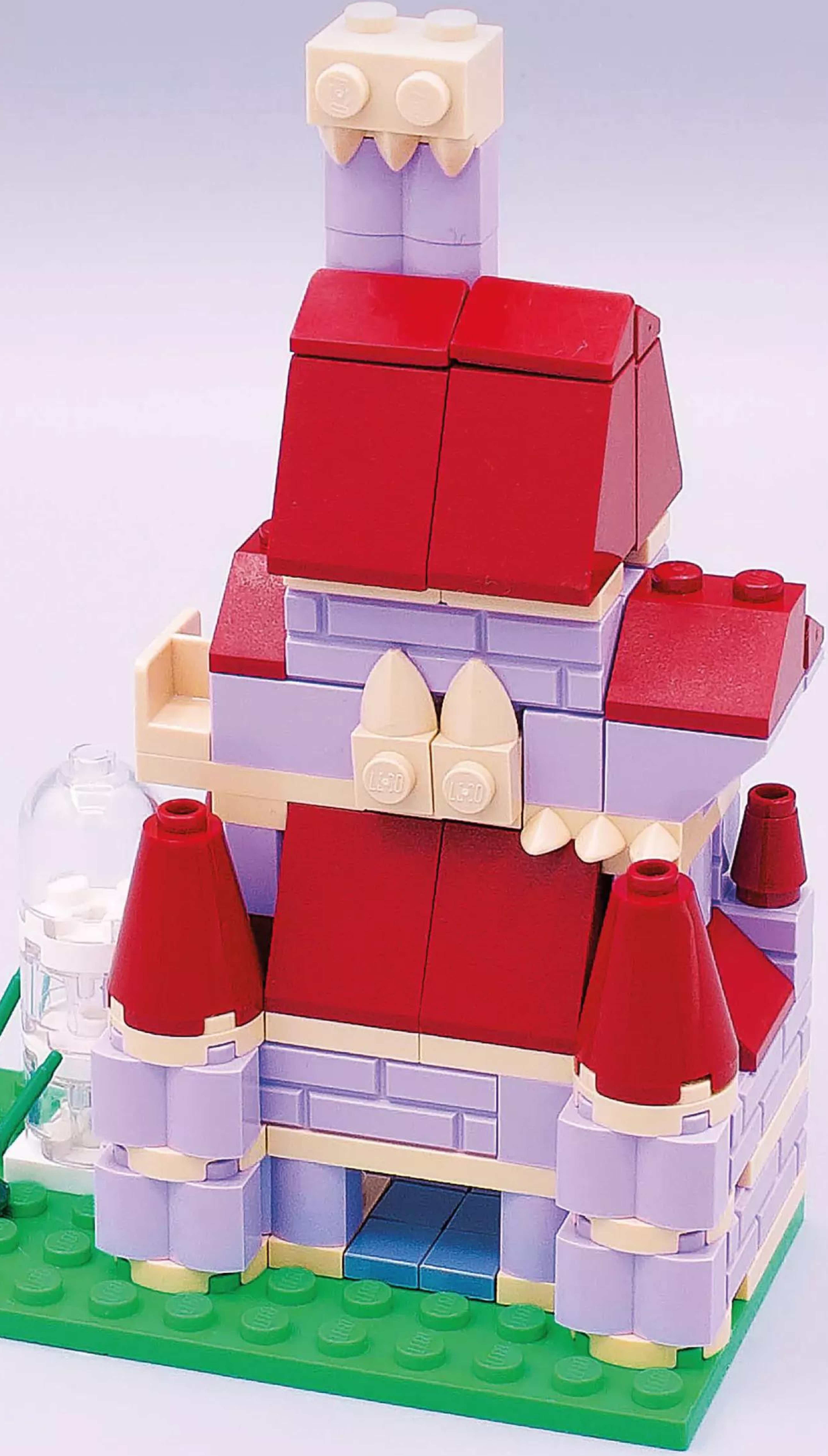
1. Minerva McGonagall

When a new McGonagall minifigure released in 76382 Hogwarts Moment: Transfiguration Class, it seemed that it could not be improved; that was until 76426 Hogwarts Castle: Boathouse, in which the new McGonagall became the definitive version. Yes, there's the arm printing and the hat and hair piece that first released in 76426, but the robes have also been amplified with a variety of gorgeous accents. McGonagall's emerald robes are intricately detailed, then there's the accurate head that captures the character's stern and caring personality. McGonagall is a fan favourite character, no less because of her portrayal by Maggie Smith in the films, and it's right that she has been immortalised in this beautiful minifigure.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Beauty and the Beast Castle

Capture the magic of a classic Disney movie and build an enchanted castle in miniature



Castles have been synonymous with Disney ever since Snow White ran away from her stepmother in the classic 1937 movie. During the 1990s resurgence of Disney animation, Beauty and the Beast introduced an enchanted castle where inanimate objects have come to life, which was recently delivered as a detailed set – 43263 Beauty and the Beast Castle. With its striking lavender, tan and dark red colour palette, the official model inspires this miniature version.

The challenge with miniaturising any building is getting the proportions right – both the shape of the structure and the spread of colours. It is never possible to match the subject matter perfectly, so figuring out how to compromise where necessary, yet keeping everything recognisable, is essential.

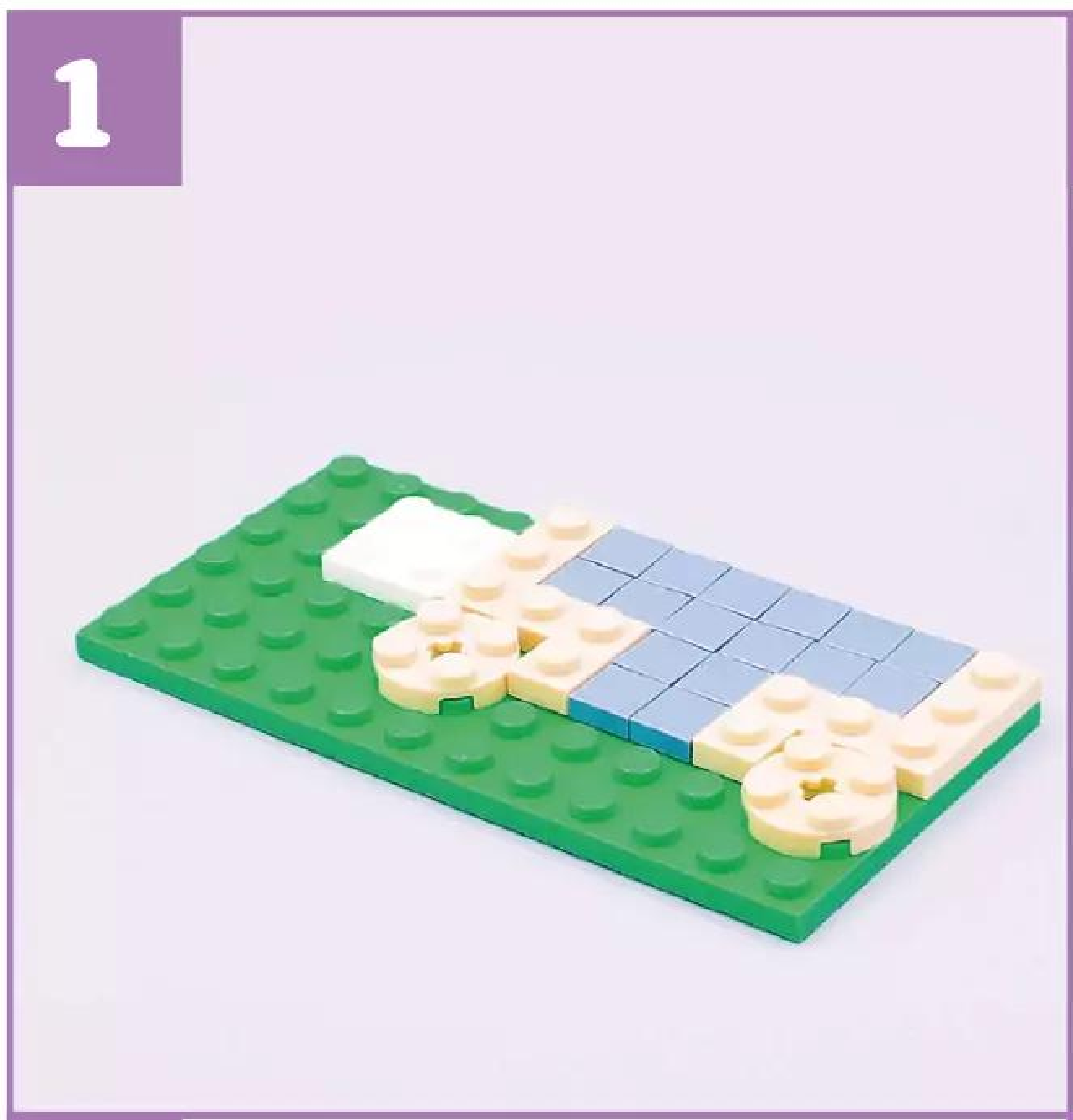
The key to this build is depicting all of the non-symmetrical castle's towers, especially the tallest tower and the library wing with its large glass windows.

Disney's pantheon of movies has showcased some fabulous structures. Many of these such as the Sultan's palace from Aladdin and King Tritan's kingdom from The Little Mermaid have had smaller scale models, but have not been offered at microscale. Taking them down to this size could be a fun project.

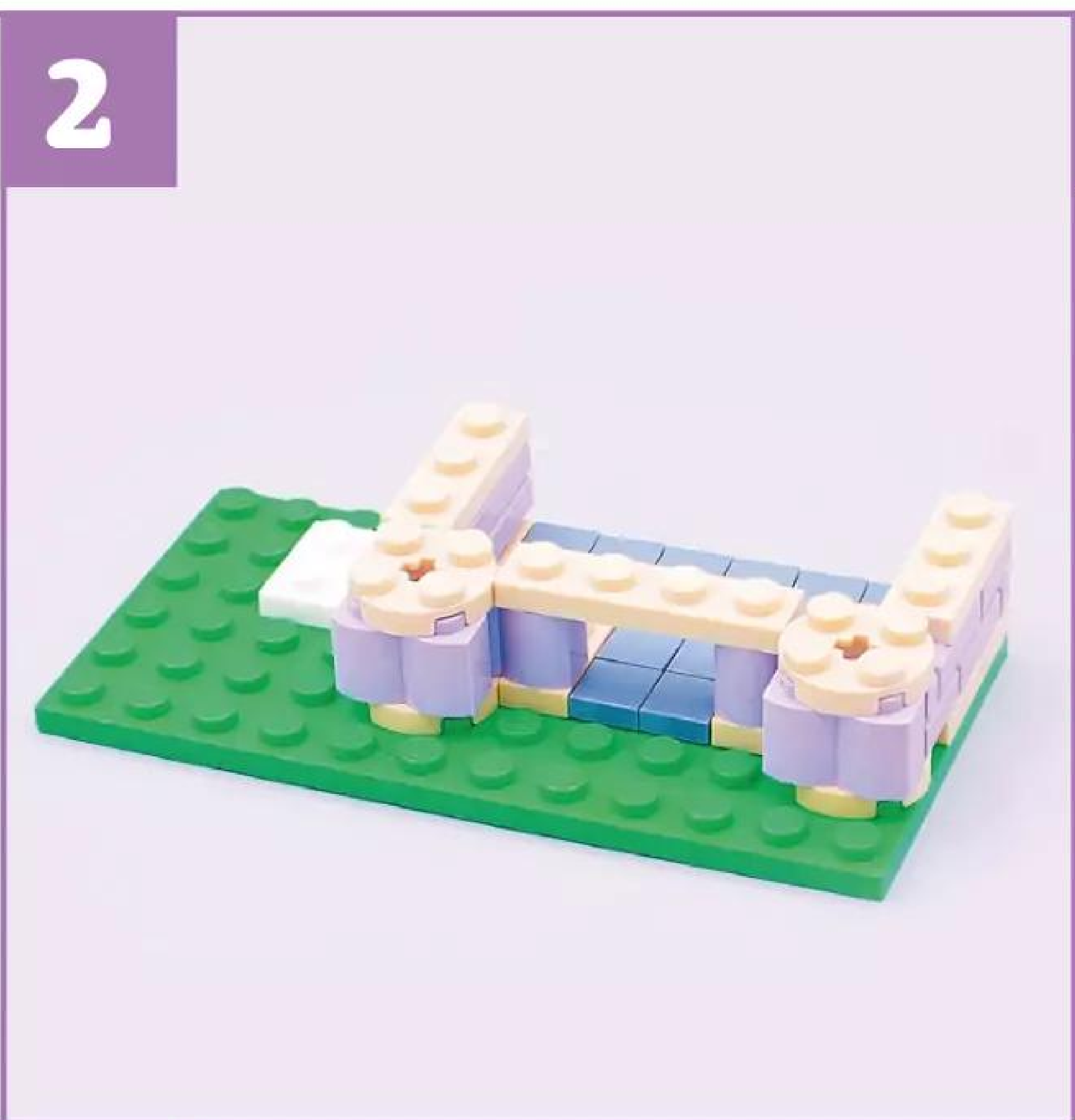
WILL TACHICK

Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/beast-castle

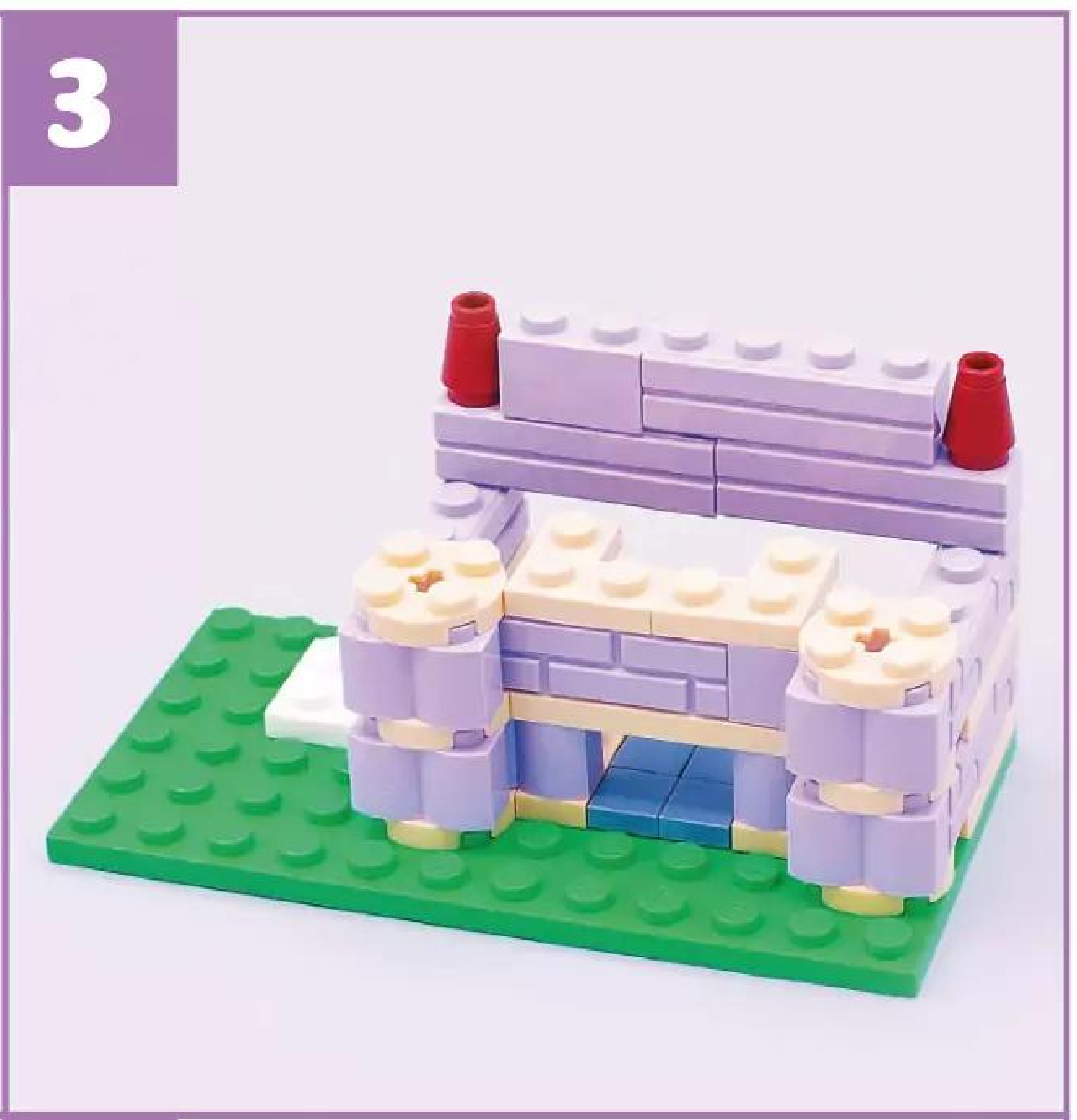
1



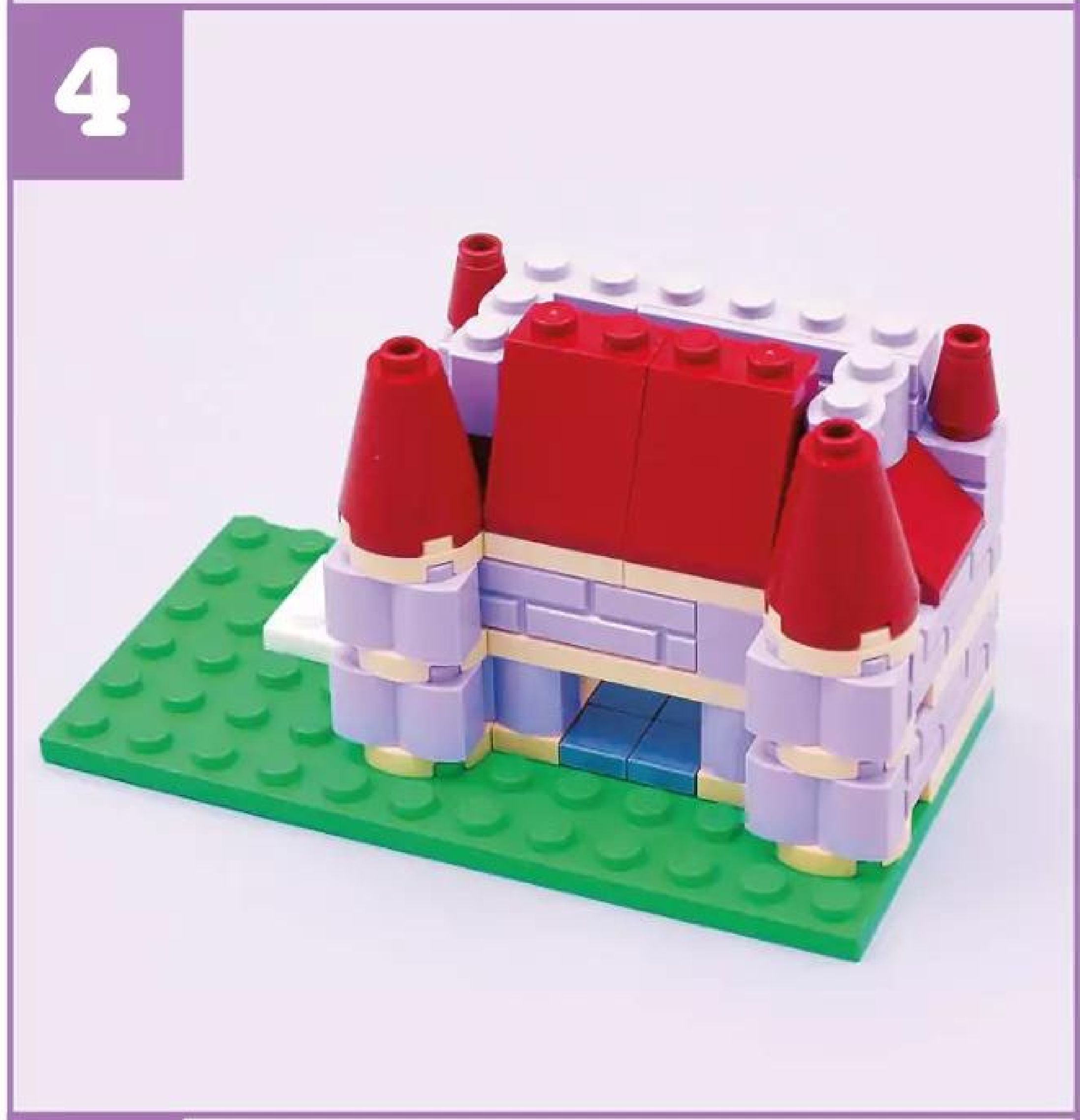
2



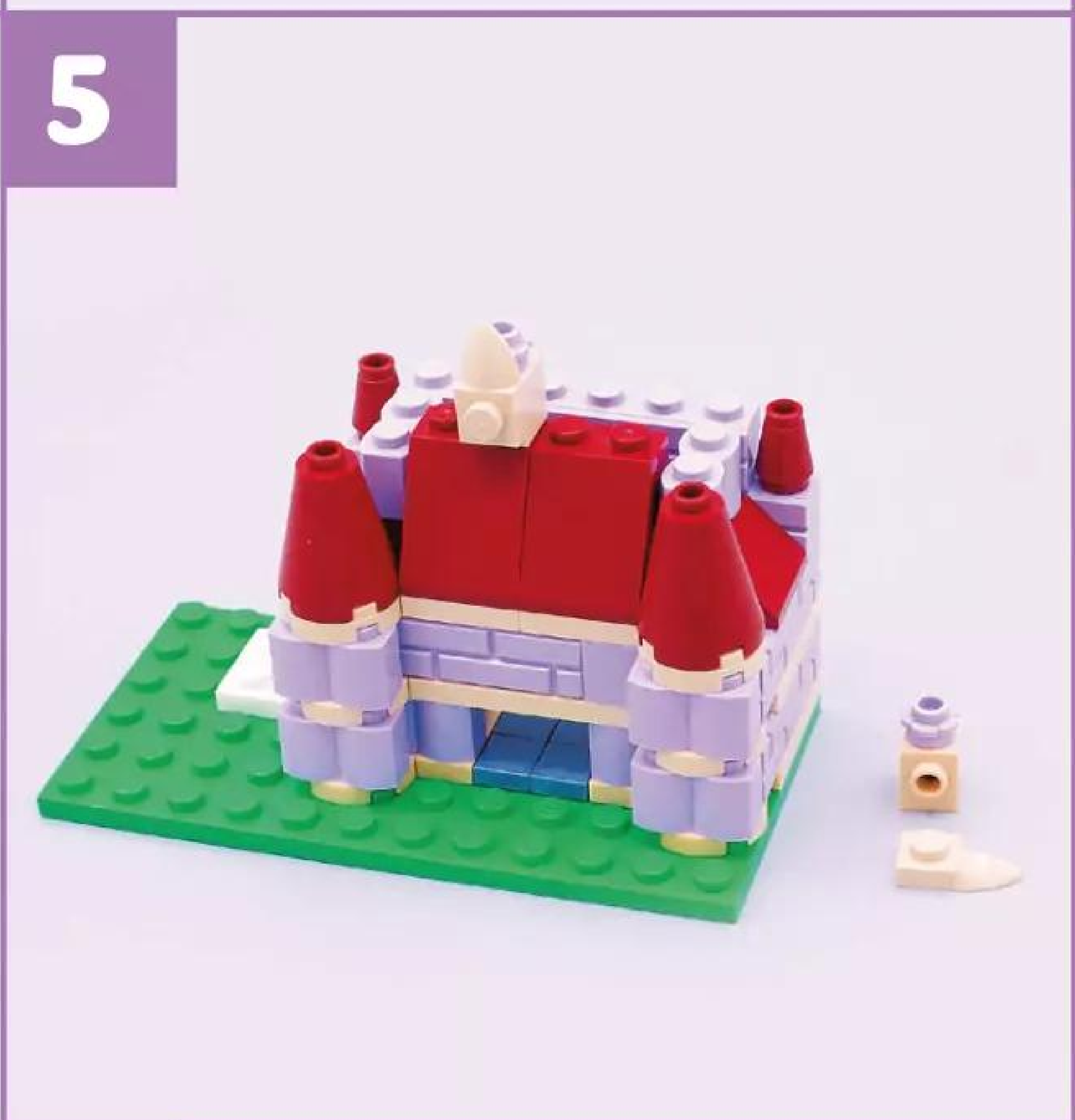
3



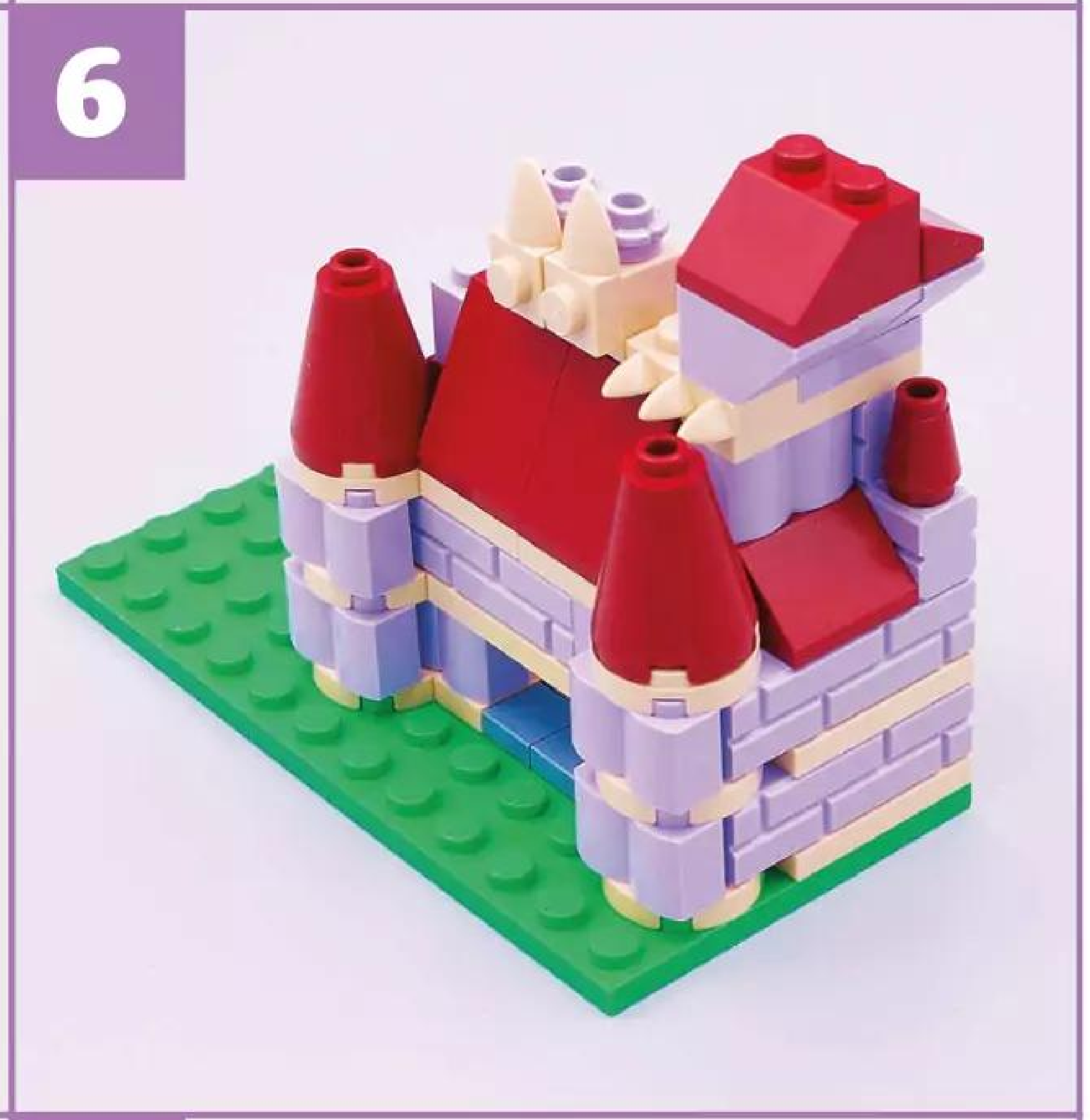
4



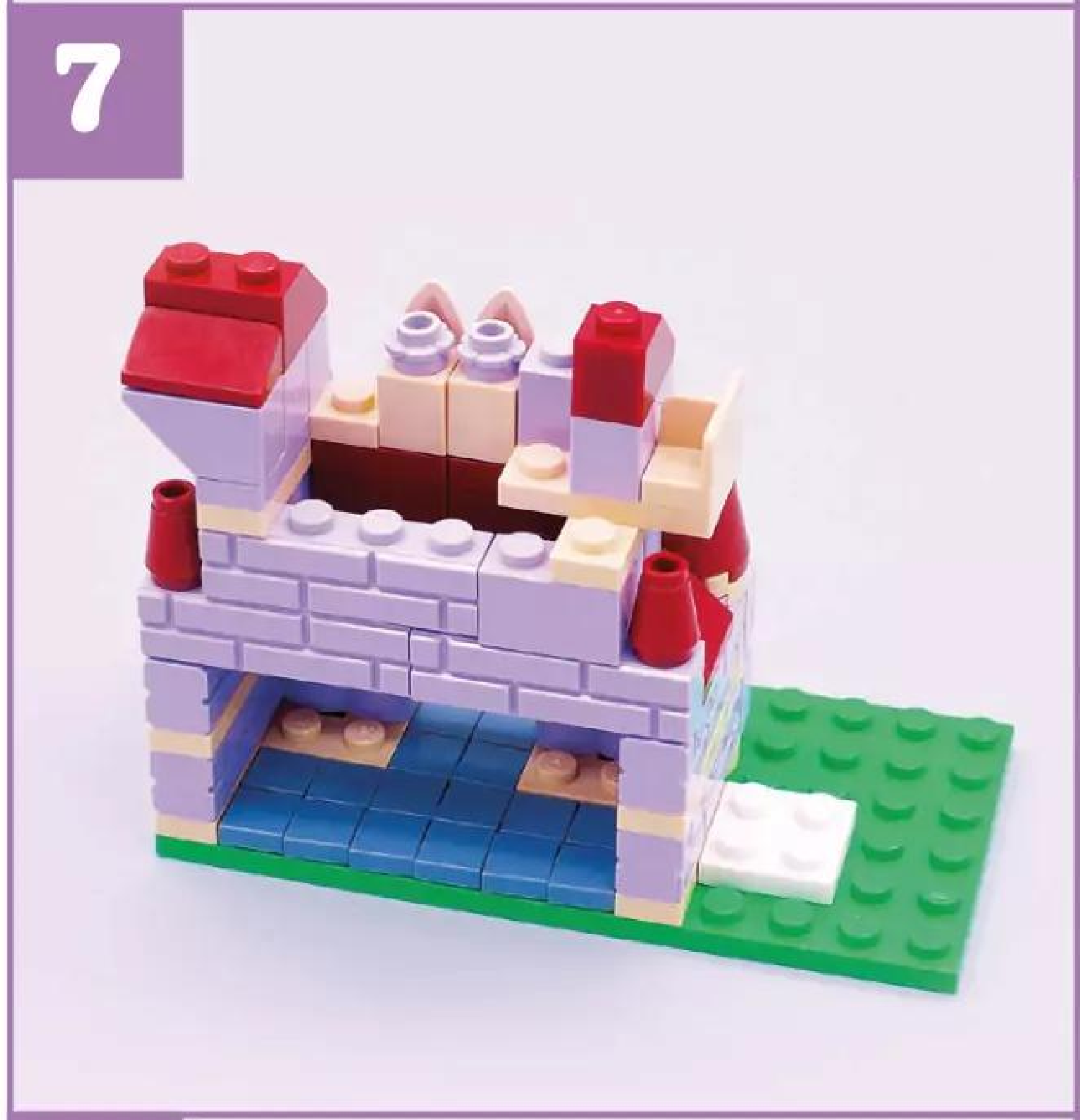
5



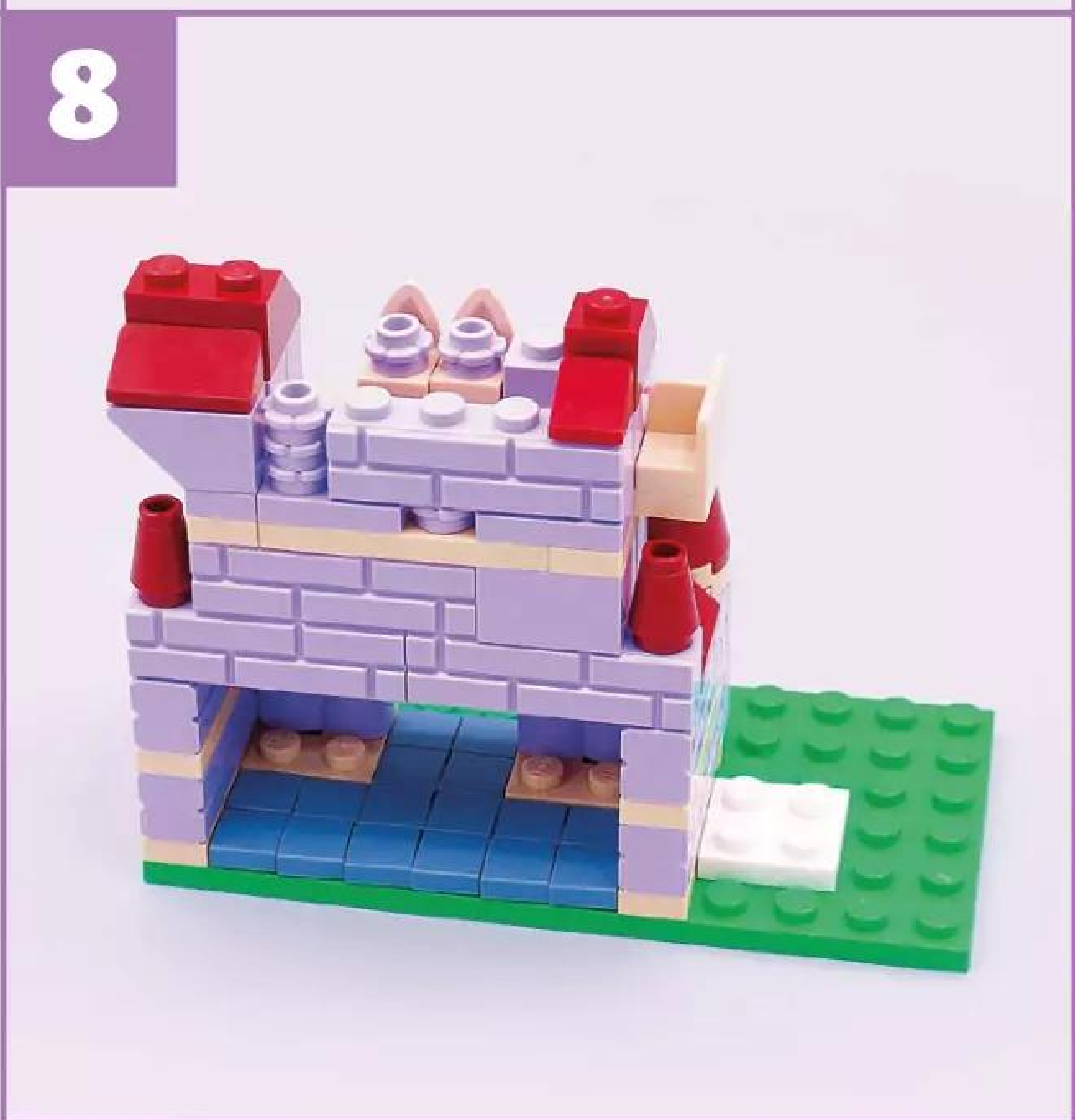
6



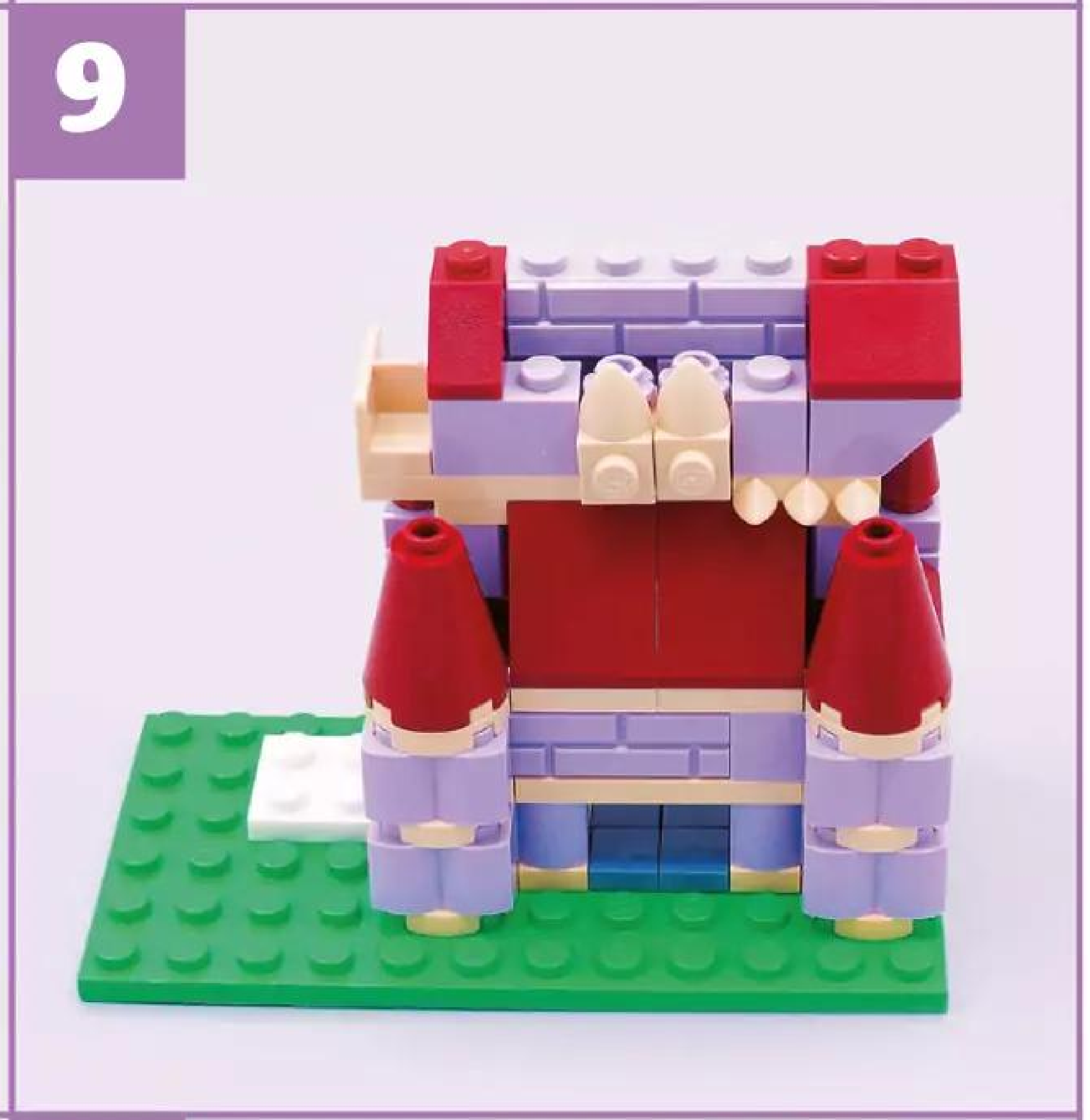
7



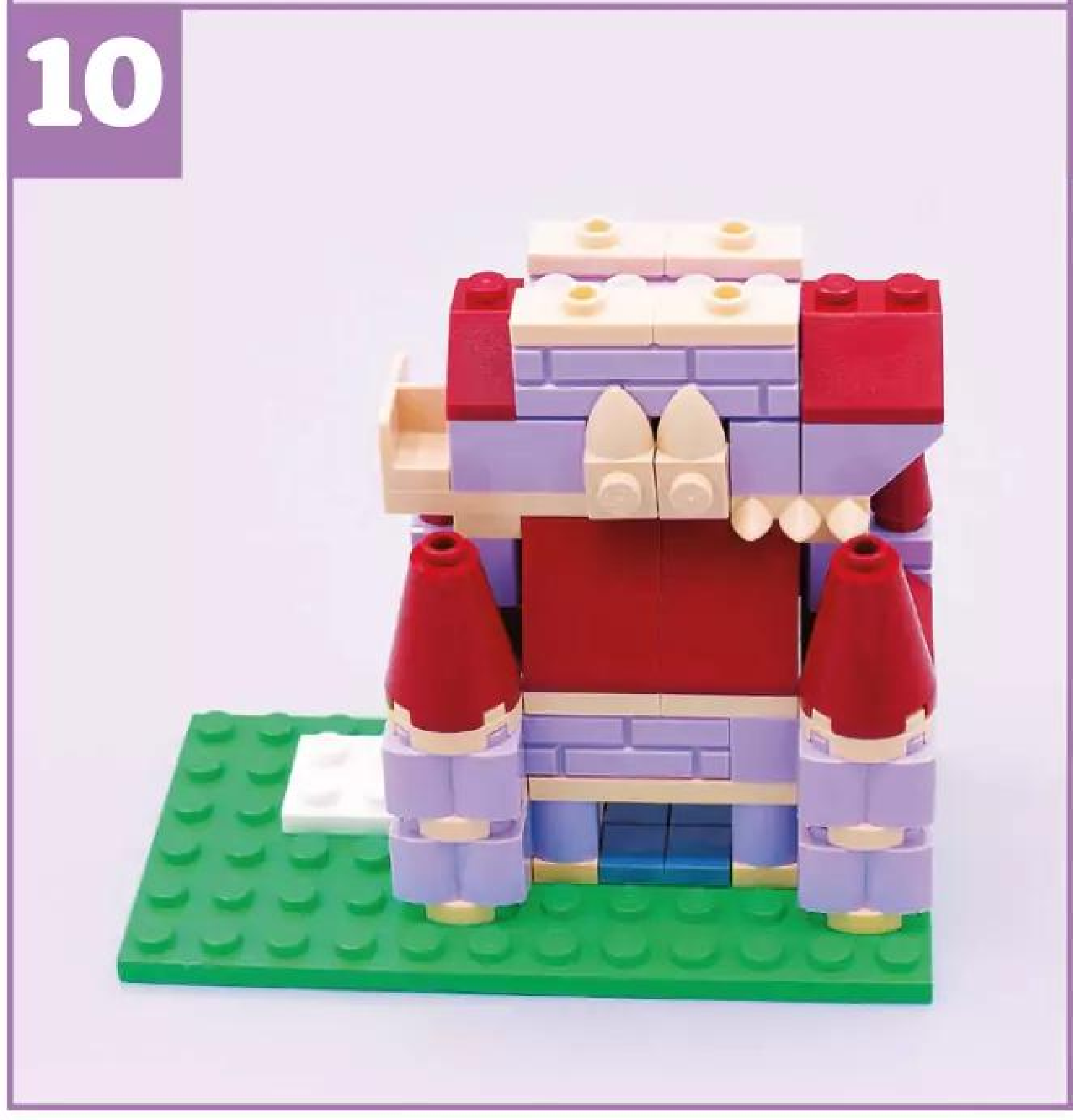
8



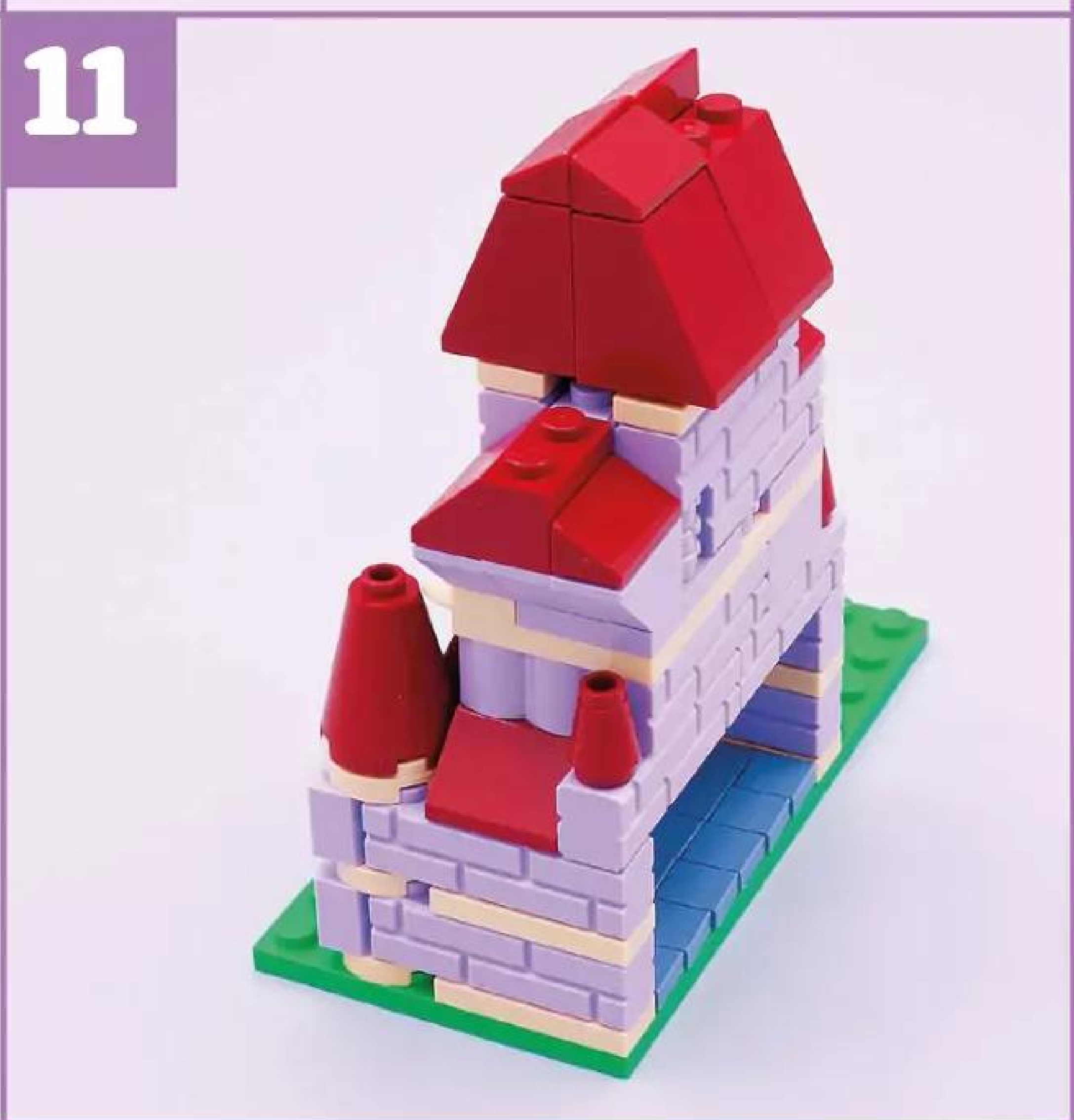
9



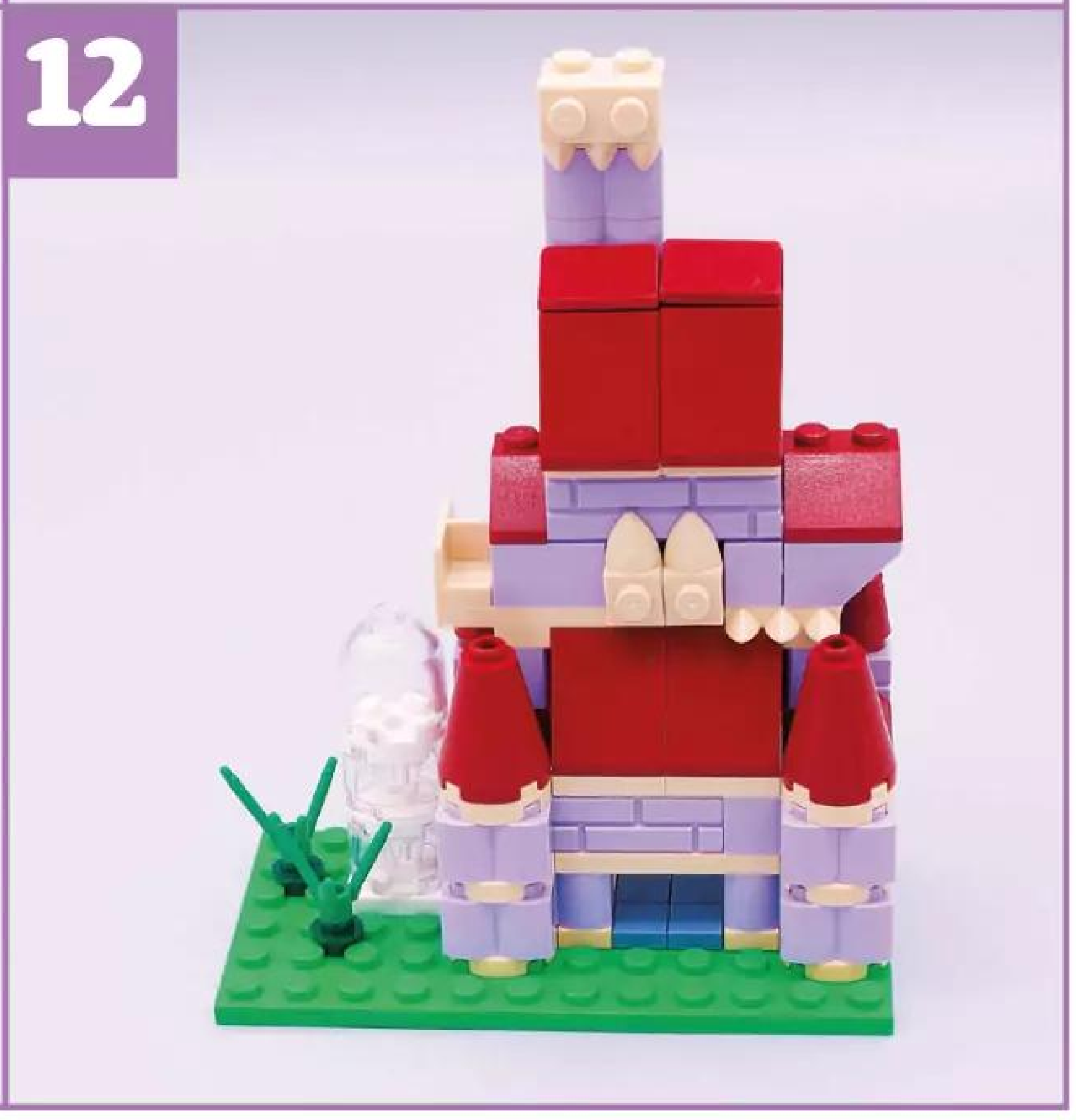
10



11



12



EVENTS ALL ACROSS THE UK!

Our events take place all across the UK, bringing the ultimate Pokémon experience to a city or town near you!

Check where we'll be next and join us for an unforgettable day of Pokémon fun!

PERFECT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

MORE THAN JUST A CARD SHOW

WITH OVER 50 DEDICATED TRADERS IN ATTENDANCE, YOU'LL BE SURROUNDED BY A VIBRATE MARKETPLACE BURSTING WITH EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING POKÉMON! NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO BE TRANSPORTED INTO A WORLD OF POKÉMON.

NBE

National Brick

EVENTS

Whether you are a collector, AFOL or just looking for a fun day out with the family then National Brick Events is sure to bring a smile to your face!

CALLING ALL LEGO FANS
LIFE-SIZED BUILDS
AMAZING MOC'S
INTERACTIVE MOSAIC
MASSIVE BRICK PITS!
BUY RARE RETIRED SETS

WANT TO DISPLAY YOUR BUILDS?

Get in touch with us at **nationalbrickevents.co.uk**

USE EXCLUSIVE CODE

BLOCKS10

FOR 10% OFF!

POKEMANIA

EVENTS

UP NEXT...
MAIDSTONE
SATURDAY 21 JUN
LOCATION
MAIDSTONE LEISURE CENTRE
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UP NEXT...
BRACKNELL
SATURDAY 26 JUL
LOCATION
BRACKNELL LEISURE CENTRE
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UP NEXT...
STOKE-ON-TRENT
SATURDAY 2 AUG
LOCATION
FENTON MANOR SPORTS COMPLEX
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UP NEXT...
BARNSLEY
SUNDAY 10 AUG
LOCATION
BARNSLEY METRODOME
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UP NEXT...
ABERDEEN
SUNDAY 24 AUG
LOCATION
P&J LIVE
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UP NEXT...
CANTERBURY
SUNDAY 7 SEP
LOCATION
UNIVERSITY OF KENT SPORTS CENTRE
BOOK TICKETS TODAY

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW!
JUL 13
CARDIFF
DEPOT
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

NEW!
JUL 13
LEEDS
The Edge
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

RETURNING TO
JUL 19
LEICESTER
The Venue @DMU
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

RETURNING TO
JUL 20
LINCOLN
University of Lincoln Sports Centre
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

NEW!
JUL 26
BRISTOL
UWC Centre for Sport
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

RETURNING TO
JUL 27
IPSWICH
Inspire
Sponsored by TONEIL BRICKS

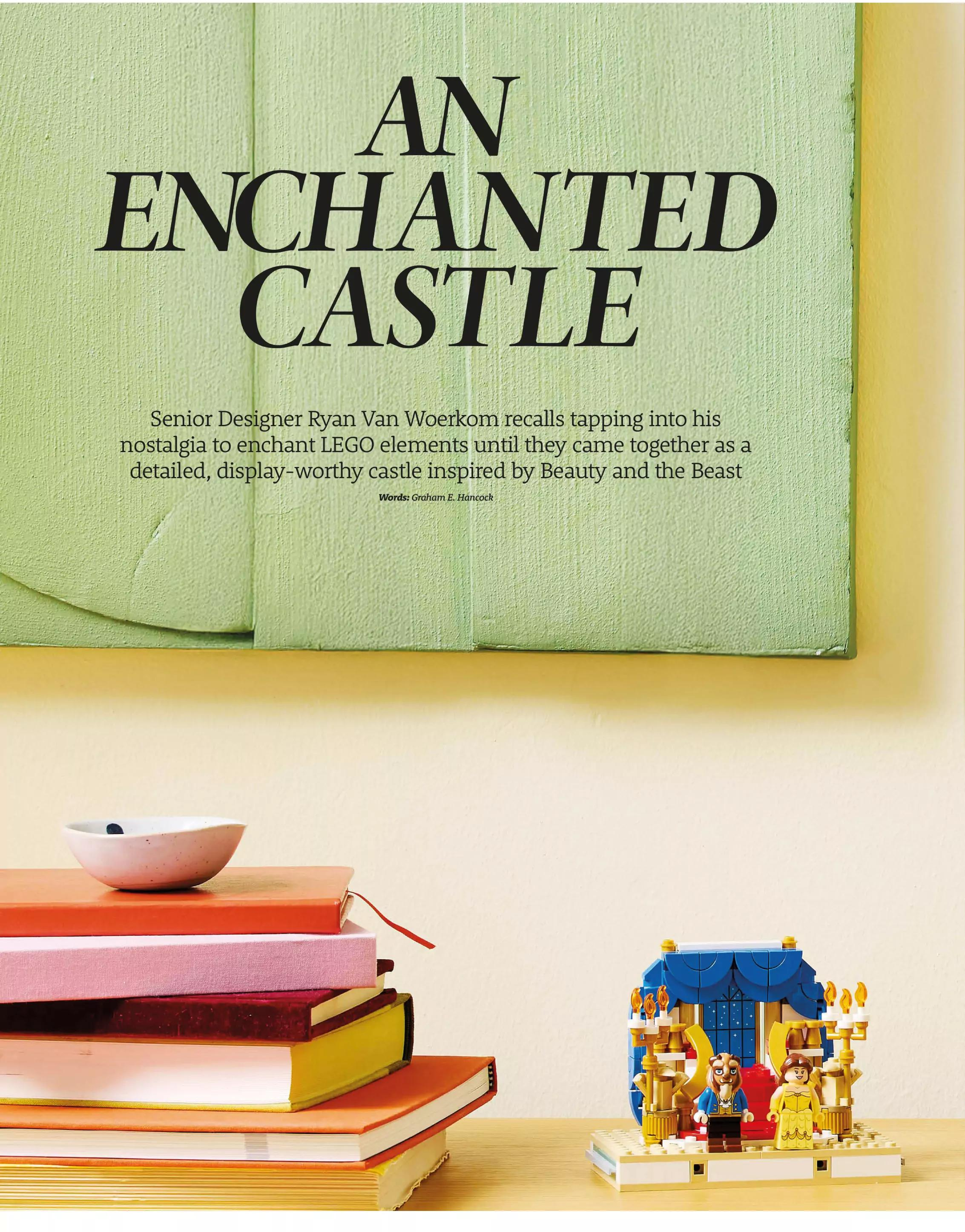
USE EXCLUSIVE CODE **BLOCKS10** FOR 10% OFF!

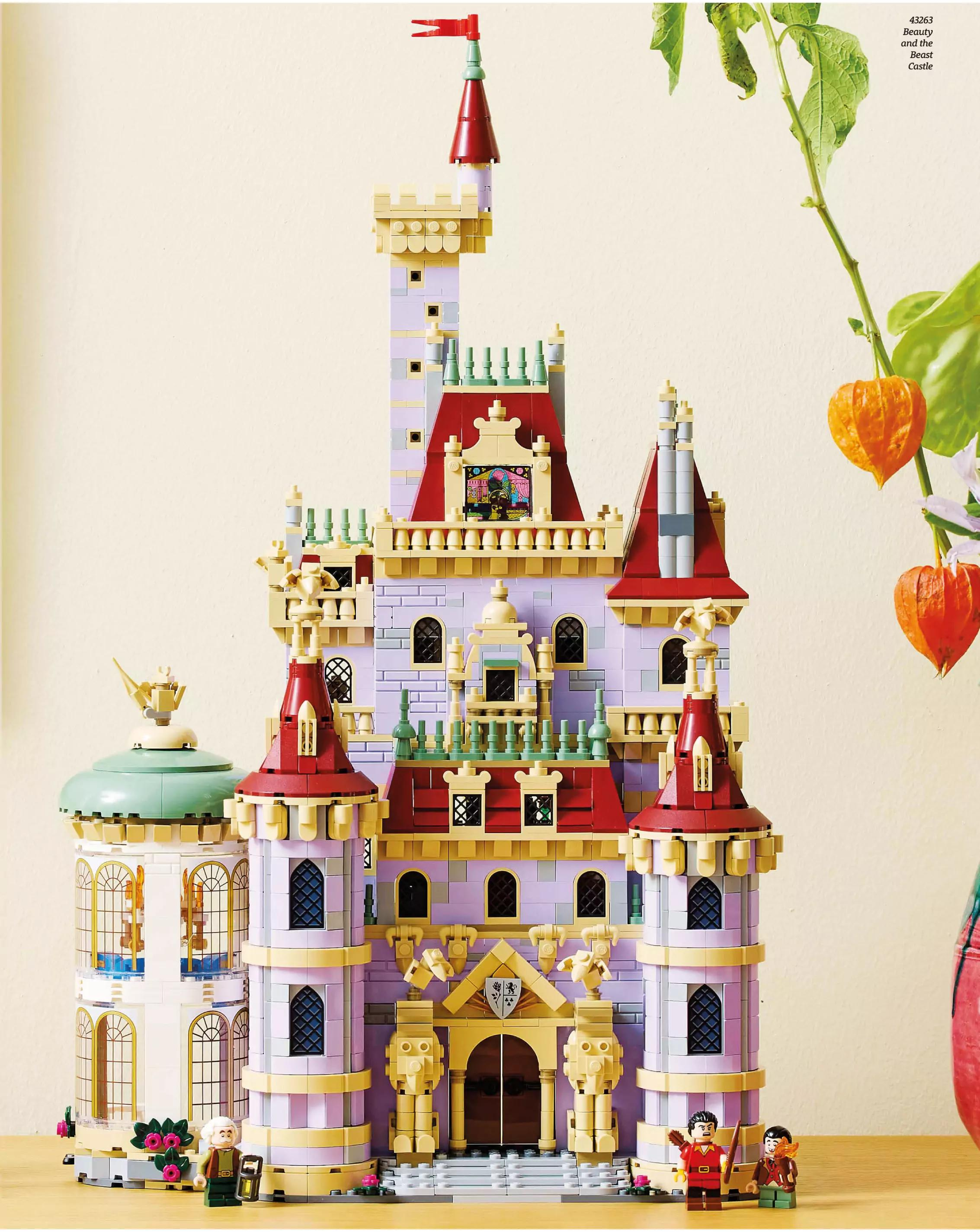
Book tickets at **nationalbrickevents**.co.uk

AN ENCHANTED CASTLE

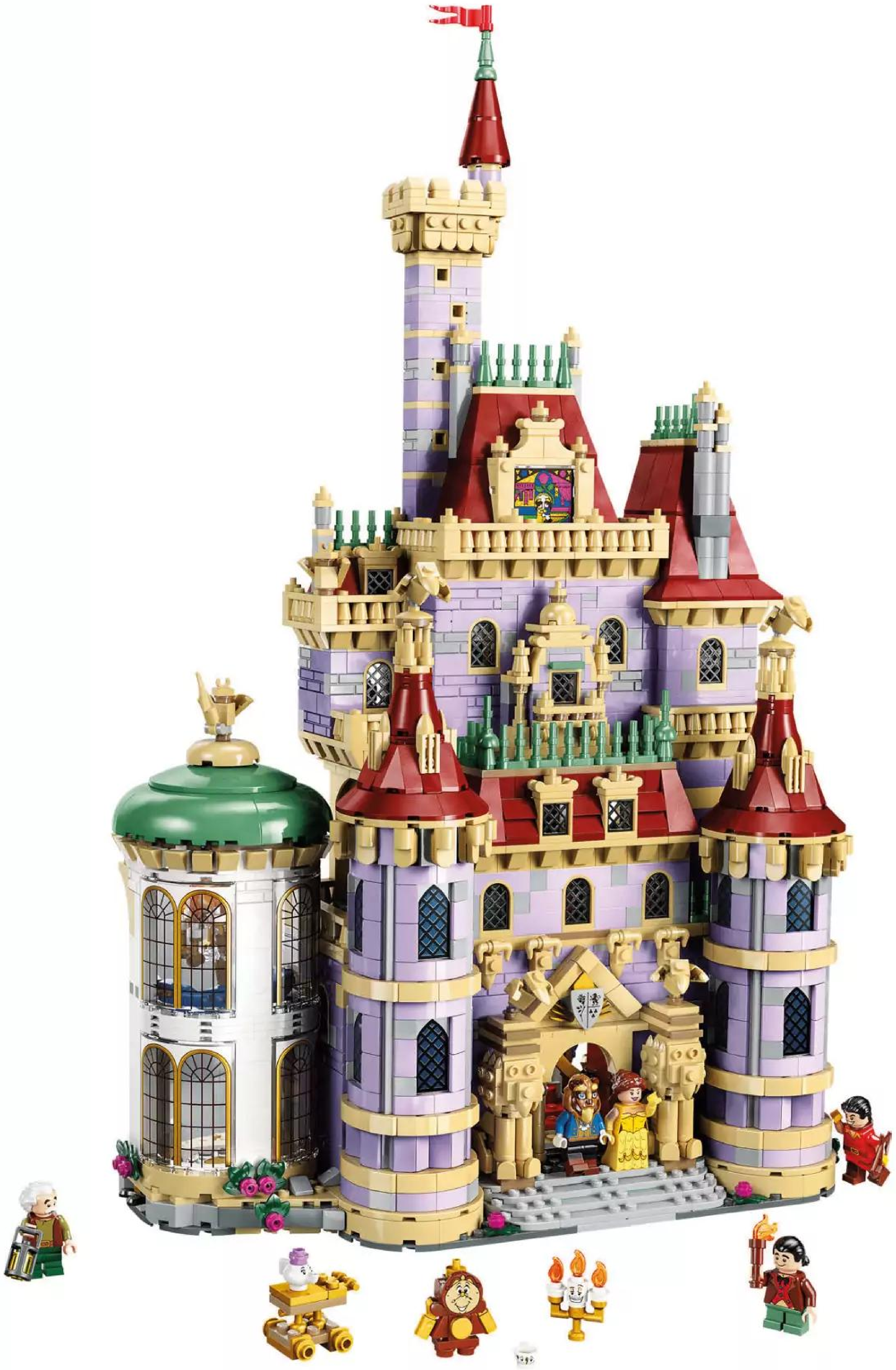
Senior Designer Ryan Van Woerkom recalls tapping into his nostalgia to enchant LEGO elements until they came together as a detailed, display-worthy castle inspired by Beauty and the Beast

***Words:** Graham E. Hancock*





43263 Beauty and the Beast Castle



Once upon a time, in a far(ish) away land, the LEGO Disney team were tasked with tugging on the love that adults have for Beauty and the Beast, the beloved animated feature that tells a story of redemption unlocked by true love, with a sizable new castle model. Sure enough, the designers put their skills to the test and – presumably while singing and dancing – came up with an intricate, detailed representation of the film's central location.

Beauty and the Beast was directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, with unforgettable songs from lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken. It arrived in cinemas in 1991, following The Little Mermaid and The Rescuers Down Under, preceding Aladdin and The Lion King, as part of the Disney renaissance.

It was a period that allowed a new generation to fall in love with Disney animation. Given that Beauty and the Beast is now 34 years old, it is more than due for a detailed LEGO model for adults who remember seeing it as children. Senior Model Designer Ryan Van Woerkom has his own nostalgia for the feature.

"Beauty and the Beast was one of those VHS films that my siblings and I wore out. It was a childhood favourite film, a top tier classic Disney movie. I was having a chat with my mom about it the other day and I asked – 'okay, who was the main fan?' – and it was my older sister. I think I really was influenced by her love of the character Belle. For many years, if you were to ask me who my favourite princess was, Belle would have been top of the list. I liked that she was into reading and imagination, I could identify with that.

"It was really funny, I usually share new set launches on our family group chat and my sister was the first to respond. It was a bit of critique – 'oh, are you missing the library?' – I had to find a screenshot of the back to show her that we do have the library. I wouldn't not include the library!

"As an adult, I've come to really enjoy the history of the making of the Beauty and the Beast film. It was kind of this revitalisation of Disney animation, going back to the basics of classic fairy tale stories. It was really meaningful for me to get to dive back in and really explore the world of the film and, as always, nerd out about all of the art, the scenery, how everything comes together in the castle."

It's a film with quite the history – Walt Disney was considering adapting the story after enjoying success with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, but it never quite worked out. Even when developing the movie in the late 1980s, the filmmakers struggled to find the right tone, with the musical angle ultimately giving it the requisite charm and Disney magic.

RESEARCH AND REFERENCE

When filmmakers are crafting their movies, their focus is on telling a compelling story. In the case of Beauty and the Beast, it's very much a character driven story – a romance between the titular leads. On that basis, the film doesn't linger on the exterior of the castle and quickly moves the action to the interior, where Belle encounters her imprisoned father, enchanted objects and a towering monster.

"That's always the case with the classic Disney animated features. There's a brief establishing shot with the matte painted background of the castle, so you get it at the beginning of the film, maybe at sunrise, and it pulls in on the castle. The establishing shot is a side view with very different lighting.

"You can see a bit of the spires, a bit of the structure, but you don't actually see the whole thing. I spent time just trying to make sense of it. Then you see it a bit more at the end, when the Beast is transformed, the curse is lifted, the castle changes colour, the gargoyles change to angels and all of that."

Given that Ryan had the assignment of creating a beautiful, display-worthy castle, he had to find every visual depiction of the location that he could. "I threw all the reference images onto a single document to try to make sense of what was going on.

"My favourite example of just how desperate we were getting is that there is a particular image that pans down. It's a shot of either Maurice or Belle going away from the castle on Philippe the horse, so it's going down through the gate. I had to take individual screenshots and then stitch them together in Photoshop to get an idea of what the whole castle looks like from the front.

"My good friend Robert Lehmann, who is also a designer on the Disney team, did the original concept model for this castle. He and I were agonising over the details in terms of, 'what do you think that particular turret is, where does that go?'

"But that's a lot of the fun – really trying to do the detective work and figure out what the original artist intended. You can actually see throughout different images, the way certain towers, turrets and details appear is not always 100% consistent because different artists were working on them. It's up to us to consolidate what are the most iconic and recognisable silhouettes and details."

That inconsistent design is illustrative of the difference between designing for film and designing for a physical object. When creating a movie, there is no need to be completely consistent between shots, as the main objective is to convey a particular feeling or mood in each image. This is especially true of animation, where each shot comes from the artist's hand rather than a physical set, then even more so when it is stylised animation that is influenced by a fairytale.

Disney helped the design team find the right direction. "They provided us with some reference of other products," Ryan recalls. "There was art of the castle that I think appeared on a Disney notebook some years ago. That was another artist's adaptation. We all use some amount of creative liberty and try to reference what we have.

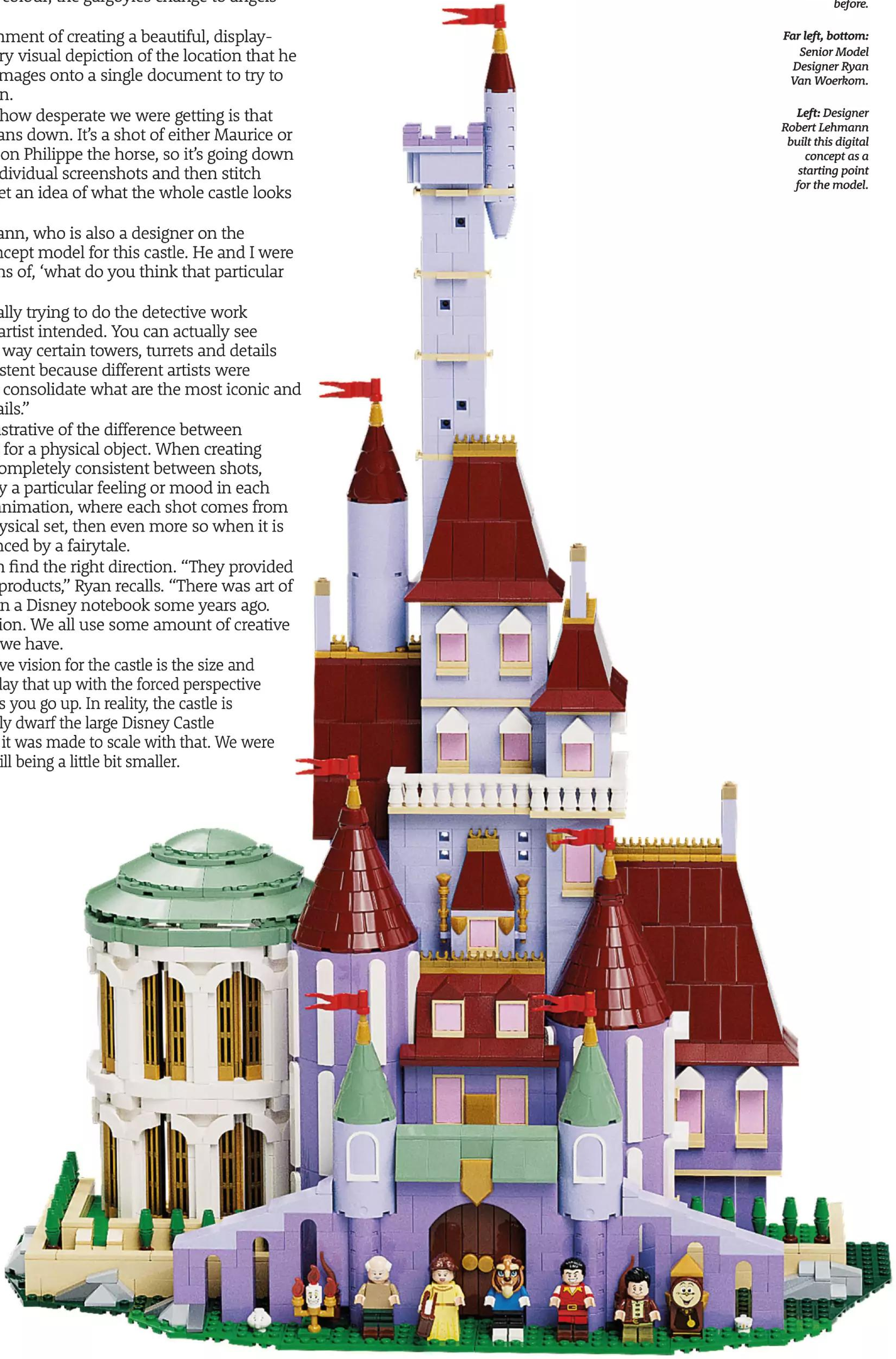
"Disney's most important creative vision for the castle is the size and verticality of it. We really tried to play that up with the forced perspective of the smaller towers and turrets as you go up. In reality, the castle is staggeringly large, it would probably dwarf the large Disney Castle [71040/43222], Cinderella's castle, if it was made to scale with that. We were trying to make it feel large while still being a little bit smaller.

"Beauty and the Beast was one of those VHS films that my siblings and I wore out."

Far left, top: *The design team explored different colours and landed on a hue that they have used before.*

Far left, bottom: *Senior Model Designer Ryan Van Woerkom.*

Left: *Designer Robert Lehmann built this digital concept as a starting point for the model.*



To achieve an authentic looking height, the castle uses a subtle forced perspective approach.

***Right:** The model starts with the stairway section.*

***Far right, top:** A turntable function allows the characters to dance.*

***Far right, bottom:** Different scenes from the film are depicted inside.*

***Below:** The dining room proudly presents Belle's dinner.*

"The sketch model that Robert did was quite similar to the end model in terms of overall scale and proportion. The significantly different part was that the base was actually completely micro scale as well. It was a similar size to the final model, but the inside would be minifigure scale and the exterior would be at a micro scale, which actually looked quite cool… but we recognised that a lot of fans will want to display their minifigures at the front, because the characters are such a part of what makes this castle recognisable. We felt it was important to have minifigure scale, but with some amount of forced perspective to really show off the height of the castle."

COLOURING A CASTLE

Robert's sketch model also gave a suggestion in terms of colour. That was something else that had to be carefully considered – again, the film reference provided some different directions for the designers to consider.

"What always really attracted me to the castle is this sense of enchantment and mystery," says Ryan. "I like the juxtaposition of the dark and light. We tried to walk the line with our colour theory and our interpretation of what the castle should be – it's not really the castle at the beginning, nor is it the castle at the end.

"It's a marrying of the two, because so much of the movie takes place in darkness, it has a lot of dark themes, so we tried to stay true to that, but also have it feel like a beautiful display model rather than a spooky haunted castle, as you would see in some of the exterior shots at the beginning of the Beauty and Beast film."

Although it's the first 18+ depiction of the castle, it's far from the first LEGO set based on it. Previous sets have opted for lavender or purple as the dominant colour, which gave the team a starting point for this one.

"I had to ask my creative lead, Benedikte, 'how did it come about that we started doing Beauty and the Beast in purple?' She didn't remember – maybe Disney asked for it at some point, so throughout the years, all of the Belle castles have been that same shade of lavender and the sketch model just started that way.

"As we looked at it, we were thinking about whether there is a different colour we should be considering. When you look at the establishing shot from the film, the castle almost appears white or off white, it has a rising sun or something that gives it some warm tones. Then when it's cursed, it is somewhere between a dark grey, dark purplish, sickly green, depending

on the lighting. At the end, when the curse is lifted, certain parts of the castle almost look like they are a pinkish lavender marble. I wondered if there was an intent for it to be a rose quartz or something like that.

"I don't believe in 1991 that Disney animators were considering the available LEGO colour palette! We do our best with what we have. So I don't have an answer for what Disney intended, but our logic for it was both being consistent to the brand that we've established and also ensuring that it feels magical and enchanted more than spooky and cursed.

"We always want it to look like a Disney castle, not just a generic castle. When we tried recolouring it to grey or dark grey or tan or white, it wasn't as identifiable. It just looked like a spooky knight's castle, then whenever we went back to the lavender, it really felt a lot more vibrant and magical.

"We can also see across other Disney touch points, like in the theme parks, modern Disney designers have taken a similar approach, which gave us some confidence."

MOVIE MOMENTS

When you turn the model around, the interior is revealed and it's full of rooms inspired by the film. There's a space for the Beast to brood with the

"I had to take screenshots and stitch them together to get an idea of what the whole castle looks like."

wilting rose, the dining room where Lumiere can lead a musical dinner, the library that delights Belle and the ballroom where the two leads share a dance.

"We always felt like there were a couple of pivotal scenes we needed to have, one of which was the ballroom, the other being the staircase, then of course the dining scene. We always felt like Beast's wing of the castle, where it's all torn up, could easily be condensed to just the rose, because that's really the icon. We had always planned to put that up high where space is more limited, because as you go up in the castle, you get less and less space.

"We decided to prioritise the most iconic things for the lower floors where we have more space. We really have opportunity to place figures and play out those scenes, then fit in whatever we can towards the top."

This conundrum demonstrates how even when working with 2,916 pieces, it's a challenge to fit in everything that you would like to. Ryan was tempted to include Belle's bedroom and built a version of it, but it didn't make the final model.

"It just wasn't quite as iconic as say, the library," he says. "We still wanted to include Madame Wardrobe, because she's a really cool character and also gave a nice opportunity for some extra storage for Belle's dress.

"We never had a sketch model with the full kitchen, but we did build a lot of those characters, so we were actually able to place them behind the dining table. It's nice to have those references, but not as a separate room that would require us to cut space somewhere else."

> "What always attracted me to the castle is this sense of enchantment and mystery."

THE BALLROOM

One of the most memorable shots in the film is the sweeping pan across the ballroom, which was achieved by blending hand-drawn animation with what was – at the time – cutting-edge computer-generated animation. Somehow, Ryan had to take that epic, grand, romantic moment and fit it into the space he had.

"That is where the bulk of our time and work went – how do you fit all of these cavernous spaces in a fairly small interior? If we built the ballroom with every detail at scale, it would be as big as the castle model that we have. You would turn it around and it would just be ballroom.

"Similarly, the grand staircase, the whole entryway of the castle would also be humongous, then the library is humongous in the film. There were times when we had the library stretching across multiple floors to really show the height, but ultimately we recognised that it was more important to include all of the details and find ways to make them as compact as possible.

"The ballroom was one that I was really pleased with how it turned out. To be honest, I was always in doubt if it felt grand enough, because it is so small, you barely have room to rotate the characters. But when we would take photos of just the back, with the kind of indication of pillars and the curtains, it felt right to my memory as a child – all of the colours and the details are there, just a bit smaller.

"That was the same approach that we took with the staircase. Robert had a really good sketch model for a forced perspective staircase, so we found a way to incorporate that, where you still have room to place the figures."

Those steps are built as a separate section that then slots into the model on the ground floor. "The whole idea of that staircase being removable was a bit serendipitous, because I had been frustrated that it was not accurate to the movie – when you walk in to the castle, it opens up to a grand staircase. I wanted to see that when you turn around the model. We had that idea to use rails so that we could slide that section in, then turn it around and slide it in the other way.

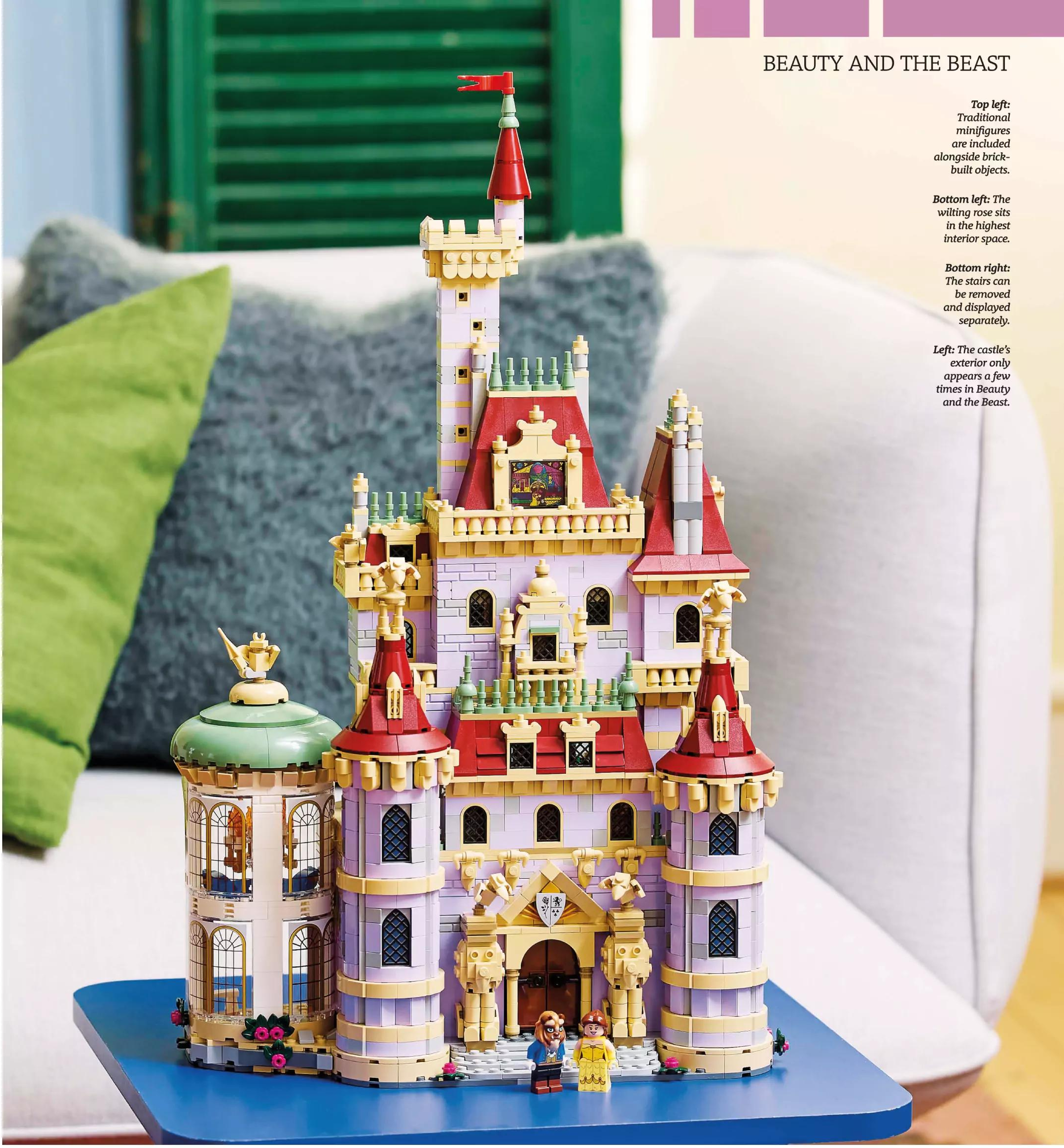
"Conveniently, you can also use it as a nice vignette or diorama on the side. It is also where we start the build experience, with this really iconic scene that you can just have there on your table with the figures to place."

BUILDING IN DETAIL

As in his other recent set, 43268 Lilo and Stitch Beach House, it's clear that Ryan isn't willing to let a stud of space go to waste. Each floor of the castle is absolutely packed with detail, paying tribute to different characters and moments from the film.

"I recognise that LEGO fans have a limited budget for what they can buy every year, so I do try to pack as much detail and intricacy into every build, so that they find a new technique or something cool that they enjoy.

"With minifigure scale, there are two ways to go about it. One is how



Top left: *Traditional minifigures are included alongside brick-built objects.*

Bottom left: *The wilting rose sits in the highest interior space.*

Bottom right: *The stairs can be removed and displayed separately.*

Left: *The castle's exterior only appears a few times in Beauty and the Beast.*

big is the minifigure's height or width – the other is to think about how small this thing could be and still look like what it is supposed to. I always think about the minimum space that this icon can take up when you scale it to minifigures.

"A good example of that is in the Lilo and Stitch model – in universe, Lilo's whole bedroom should be a lot bigger and the bed should be able to fit Lilo and Stitch. But what is the smallest possible size, where you can fit a figure laying down, that you can build it in a cute way?

"So I always try to look for inspiration in elements – usually the smaller, the better – that give some approximation of detail, then build from there. As small as possible while still being a viable interpretation of the thing. Because when I build MOCs, I tend to build bigger, but oftentimes when you shrink things, they end up cuter and more aesthetically pleasing because you're packing detail in.

"Often, when I look at our first concept models of LEGO sets that are larger, then I see the end result, I find the end result is always more aesthetically pleasing, more harmonious and has interesting composition because you're not packing it with filler brick. It's really as detailed as possible. That's always the game we're playing – optimising for size and level of detail."

That's indisputably true in this set – whether it's Madame Wardrobe next to the library, the chandelier hanging above the ballroom or armchairs next to the fire, there are intricate little builds everywhere, ready to catch the eye.

Attractive as the model may be, Ryan still found opportunities to add play into the set. "It's the little hidden play functions that bring it to life, because I can imagine that a lot of people who build this set will be a similar age demographic to me. They might have children of their own who they are introducing to some of these Disney films. It's probably an adult building this, but they could demonstrate it to their kids and have something fun to show off.

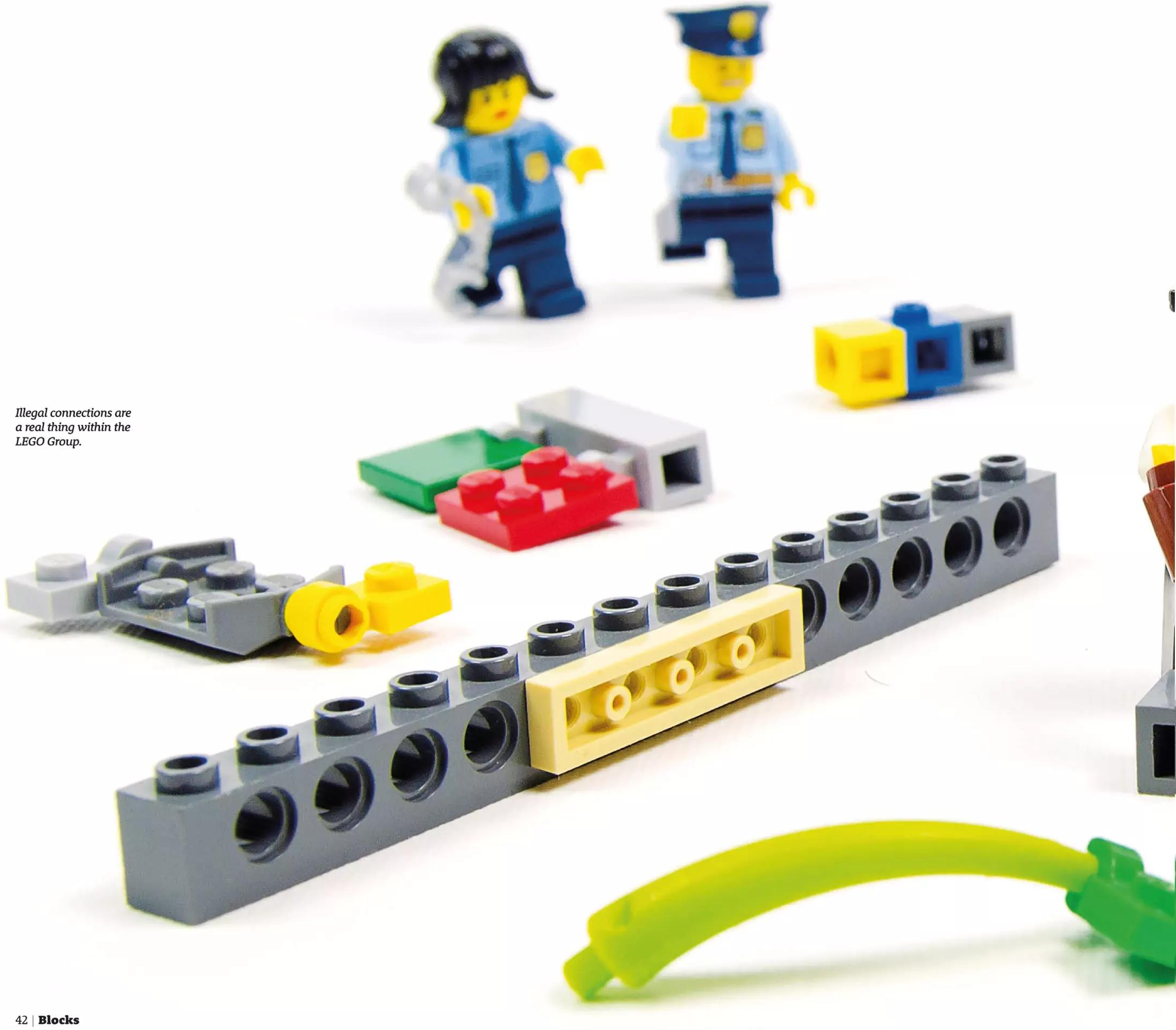
"I really like the dining room. It's very small as a detail, but just the gearing functions within the table that bring the Be Our Guest scene to life was really fun to fidget with as I was working on it. And similarly, little things like Madame Wardrobe opening up to reveal a hidden spot to store Belle's dress feels magical and fun."

Magical and fun… there's not much more you can hope for from a LEGO Disney set, especially one that pays homage to a tale as old as time.

WHY ARE SOME LEGO CONNECTIONS ILLEGAL?

Can a method of using elements really be against the law? Daniel Konstanski breaks down exactly where the term 'illegal techniques' comes from and delves into why certain ways of connecting bricks are possible… but definitely not recommended by the LEGO Group

Words: *Daniel Konstanski*

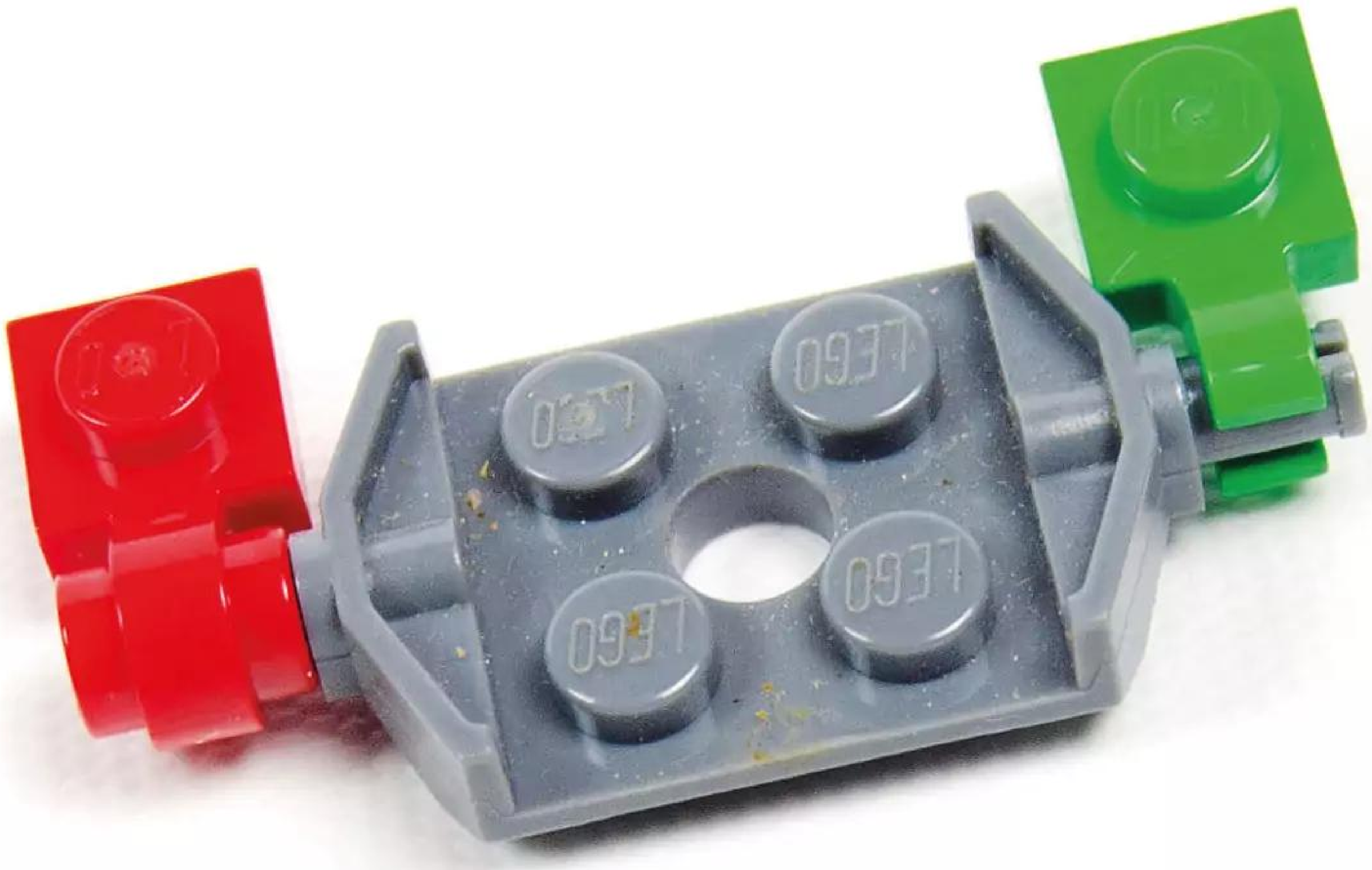


Illegal connections are a real thing within the LEGO Group.

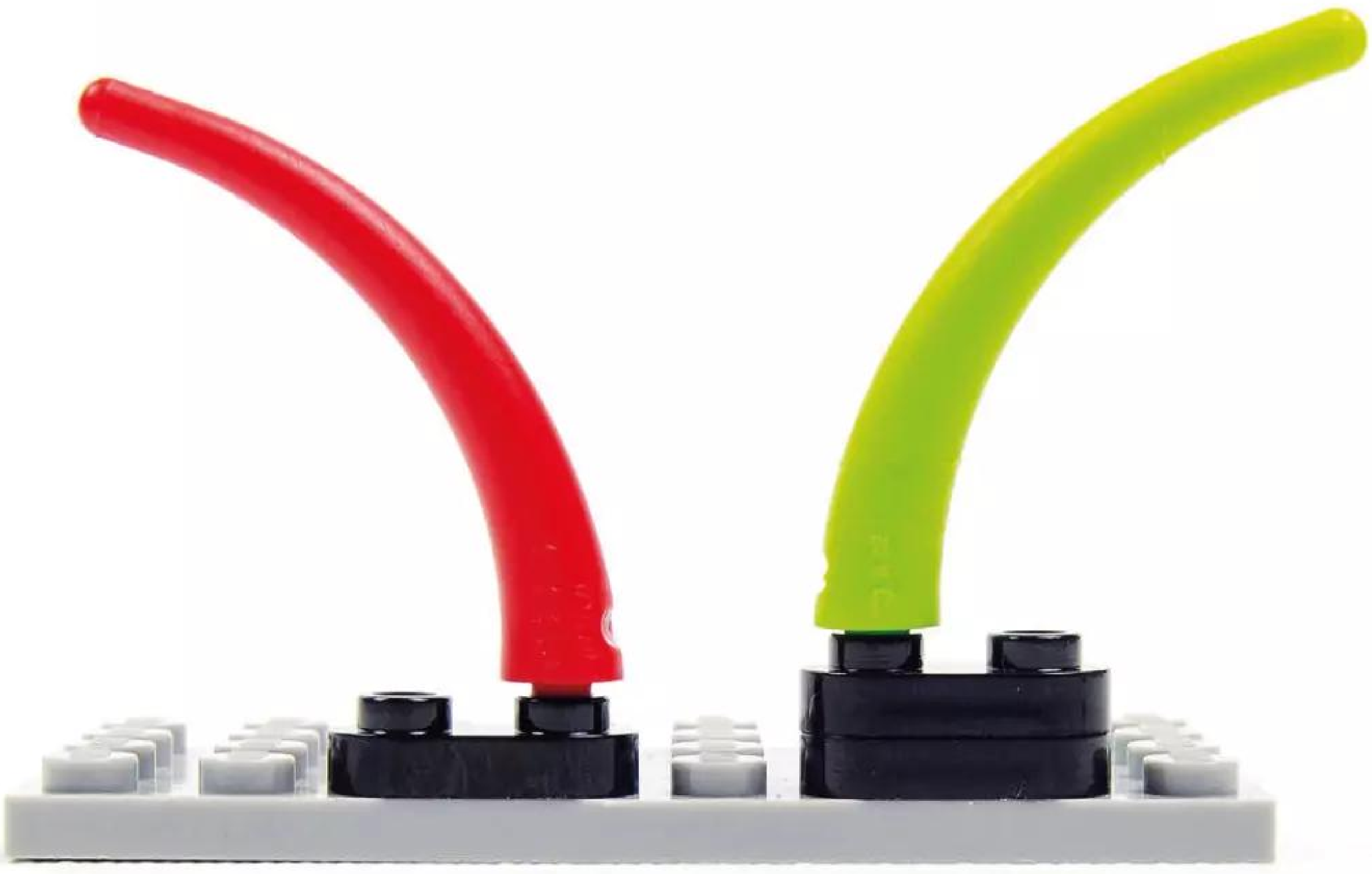
Can a way you use LEGO bricks really be illegal? Under what jurisdiction could you actually be taken to court for the way you use your elements at home? Fortunately, there are no legal ramifications to how you use your pieces. There is a whole logic behind the notion of 'illegal' techniques though.

The term 'illegal connection' is used a lot within the LEGO fan community. The LEGO Group does not officially sanction or prohibit any use of its bricks. Fans around the world regularly come up with amazing builds that use techniques and connections that LEGO designers themselves have never thought of. None of these disqualify a build or relegate it to some non-permissible category of creations. As far as the company is concerned, if someone can use their bricks to make something, then that build is legit, full stop.

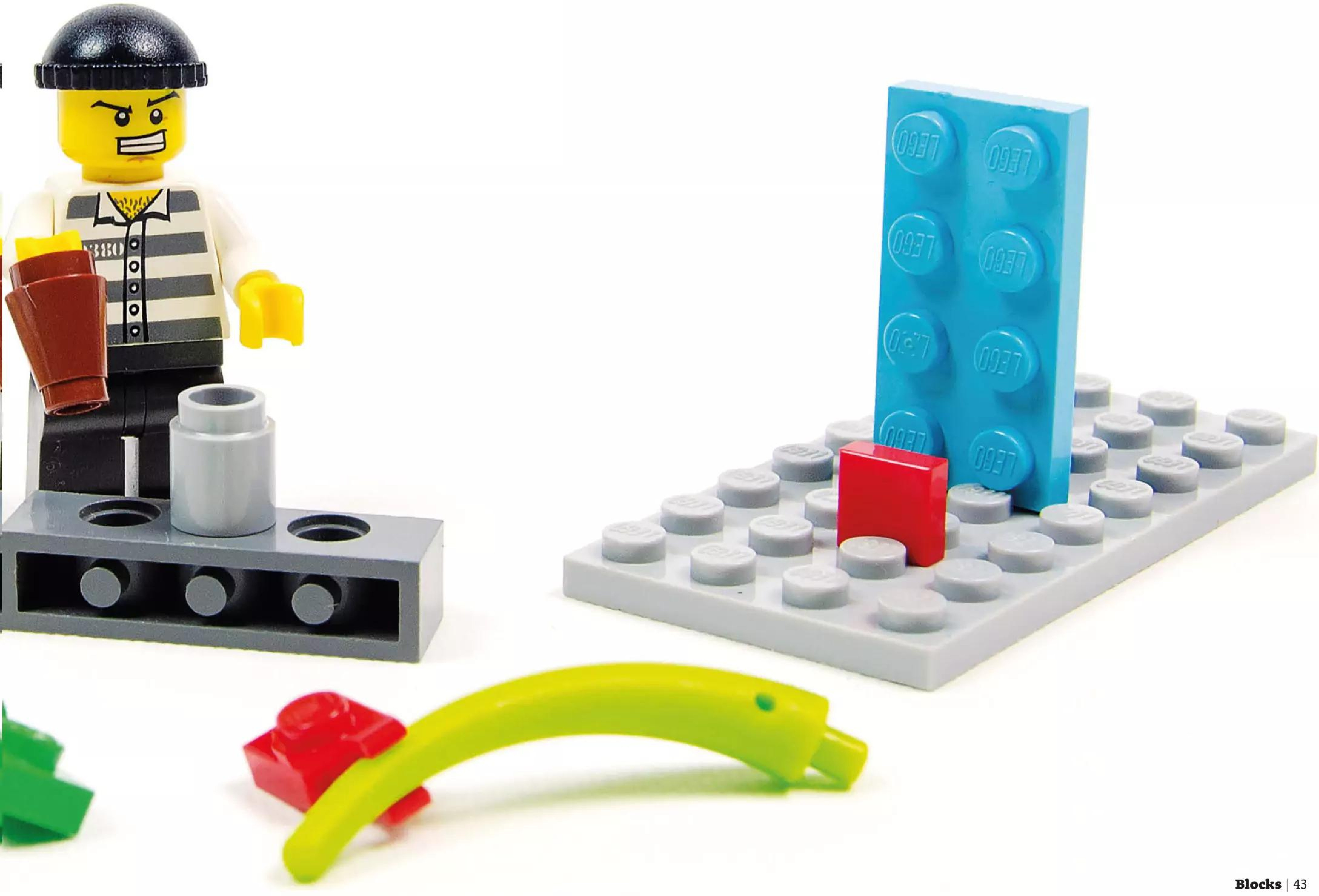
To understand illegal connections, it is first necessary to take a step back and explore an official company classification – 'connector pairs'. LEGO bricks are intended to be connected and to that end the company has, through the years, developed various ways to facilitate attaching elements. The most basic and well known are the studs and tubes on bricks, each of which are a type of connector.

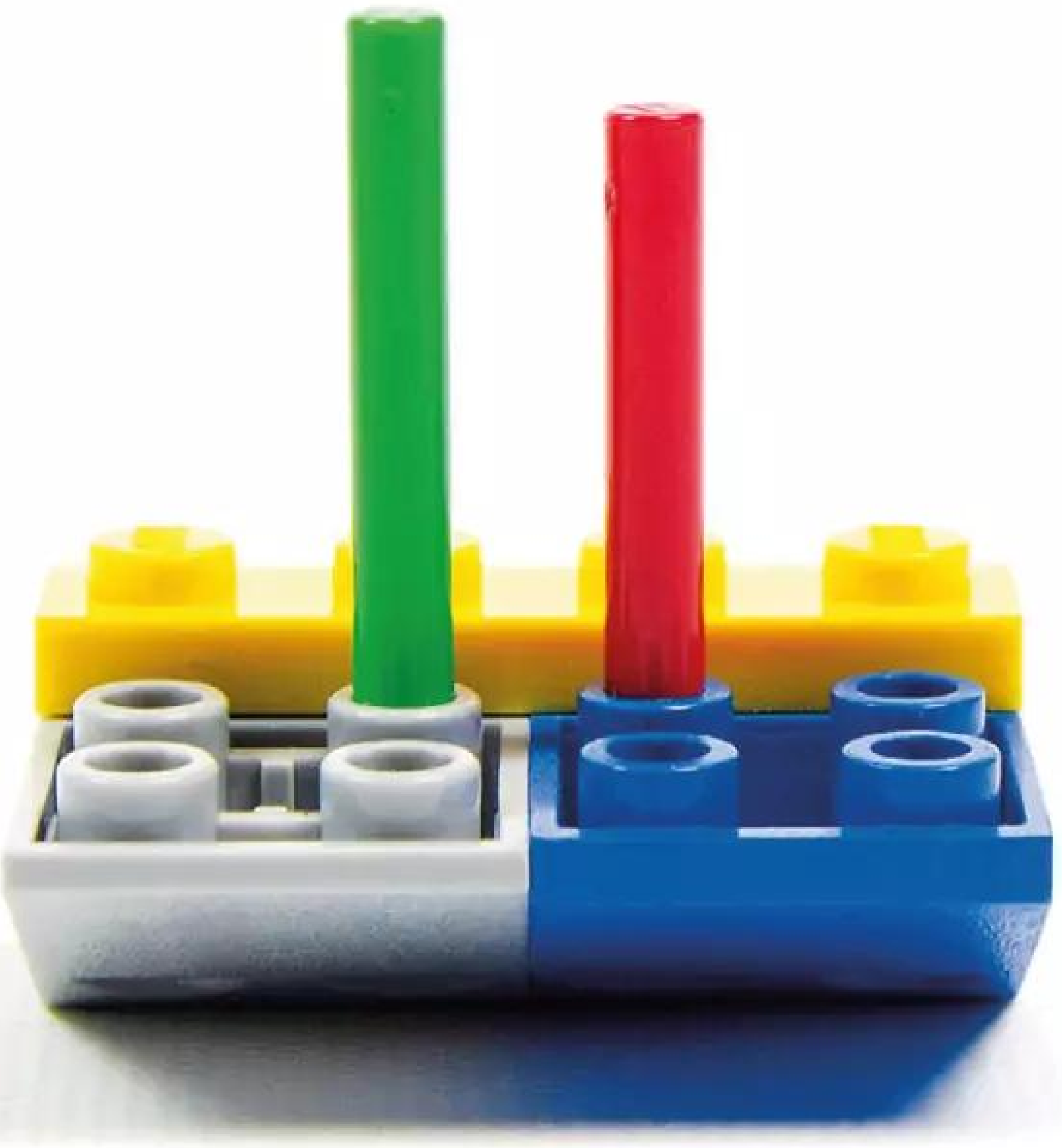


Above: Axles pinch down, allowing wheels to lock in and then rotate. When you hook a clip (green) to them, they can pop back into place normally. A headlight mount (red) keeps them compressed, making it an illegal technique.



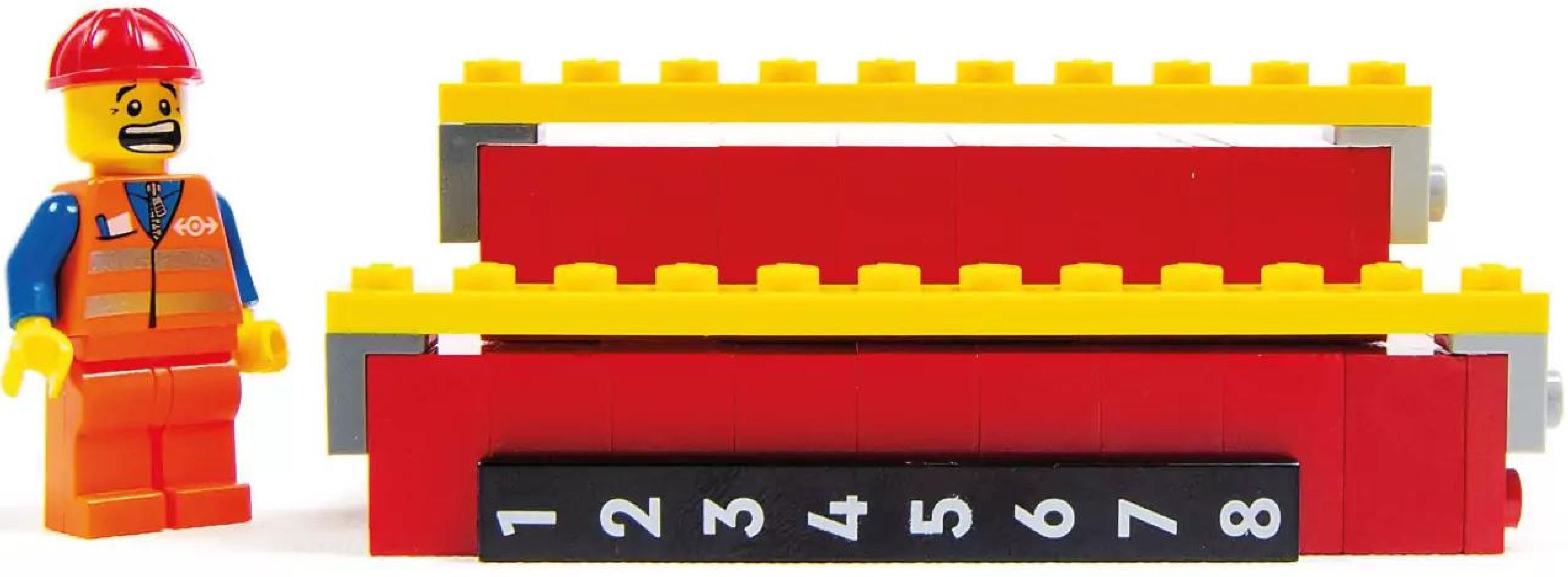
Left: *Some elements are made with different plastic formulas. Softer plastics, like these red and green elements, must be fully inserted at their base to be legal – the green attachment is acceptable, the red attachment is not.*





Left: Parts have been modified over the years to prevent illegal connections. Old 2x3 inverted slopes (blue) allowed bars to be inserted too deep making them hard to remove and potentially damaging. To prevent this, a stop ring was added in newer versions (grey).

Right: Subtle mismatches in measurements can lead to bowing and stressing of bricks. The bracket connection on bottom is legal, whereas the one on top is slightly too short and would not be permissible in a set.



CONNECTOR PAIRS

Along with those stalwarts are bars, clips, pins, holes, balls, sockets and many more. Some elements, like hinges, have multiple different types of connectors on the same component. Others, such as tiles, have one. Different types of connectors are intended to join with each other and when they do those connectors form a 'connector pair'.

The LEGO Group has poured considerable resources into the science of connector pairs, which sit at the intersection of geometry and materials engineering. There is sound reasoning behind the effort and expenditure. LEGO bricks work because of clutch power, a term that describes the gripping force created when two components are joined.

Most LEGO elements stay attached through one element squeezing another. Brick walls and tubes squeeze studs, clips squeeze bars, sockets squeeze balls – the list goes on. Technic pins and axles are the primary exception, but even those have to squeeze in order to pop into place.

The challenge with clutch power is that it needs to strike a delicate balance. On one hand, it needs to be strong enough so that constructs don't fall apart. However, if it is too strong then children won't be able to pull elements apart, leading to them becoming frustrated. Children who are frustrated with toys don't ask for more of them. Accordingly, the company has been on a decades-long mission to understand clutch power at a molecular level.

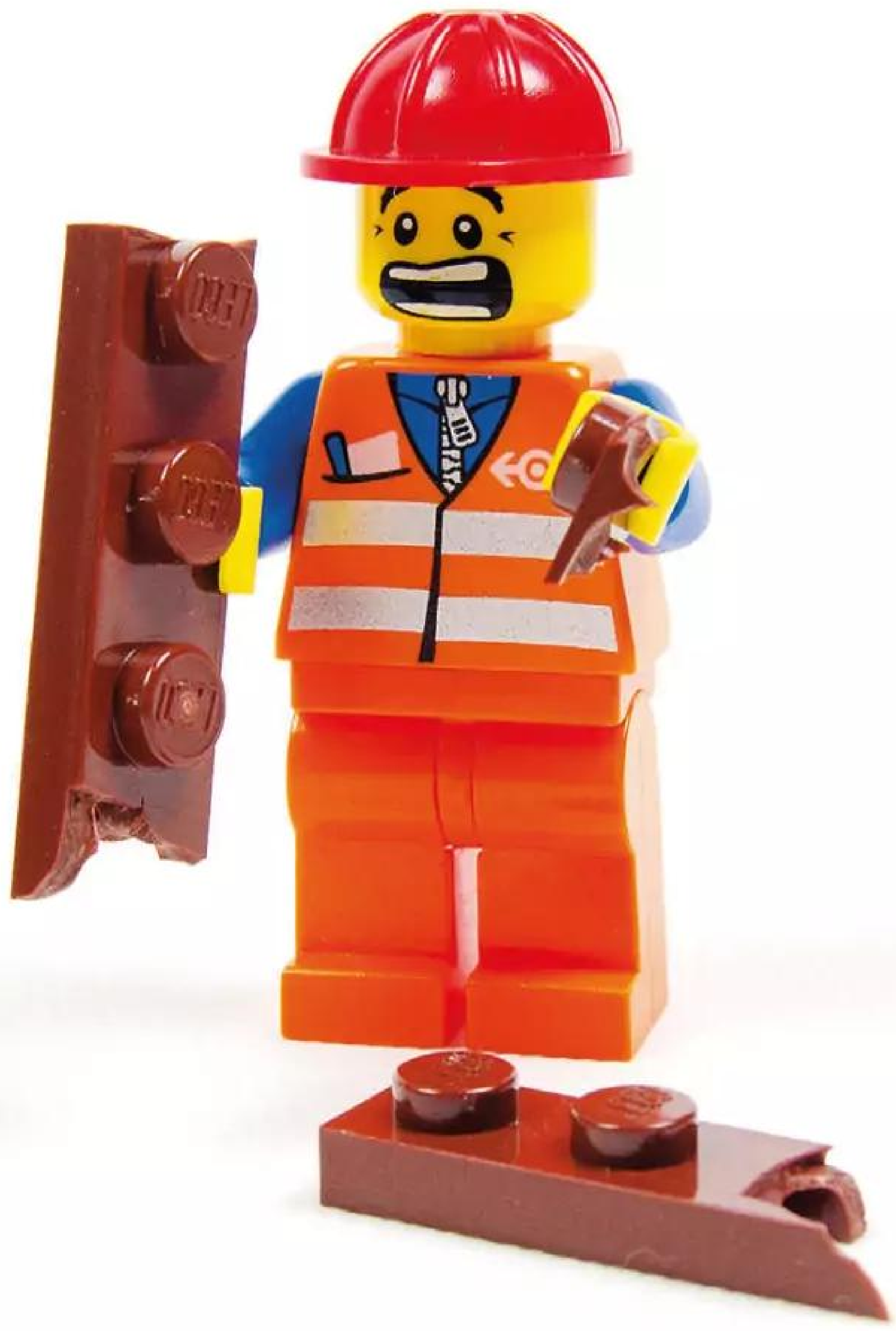
In the brick's early days, before material science and precision measuring equipment were available, designers developed rules of thumb by touch and feel. Pop pieces from the 1980s or before and there is often a greater gripping force than with similar elements today. Such experimentation led to internal rules of thumb, such as every new element should allow for at least three points of contact with studs.

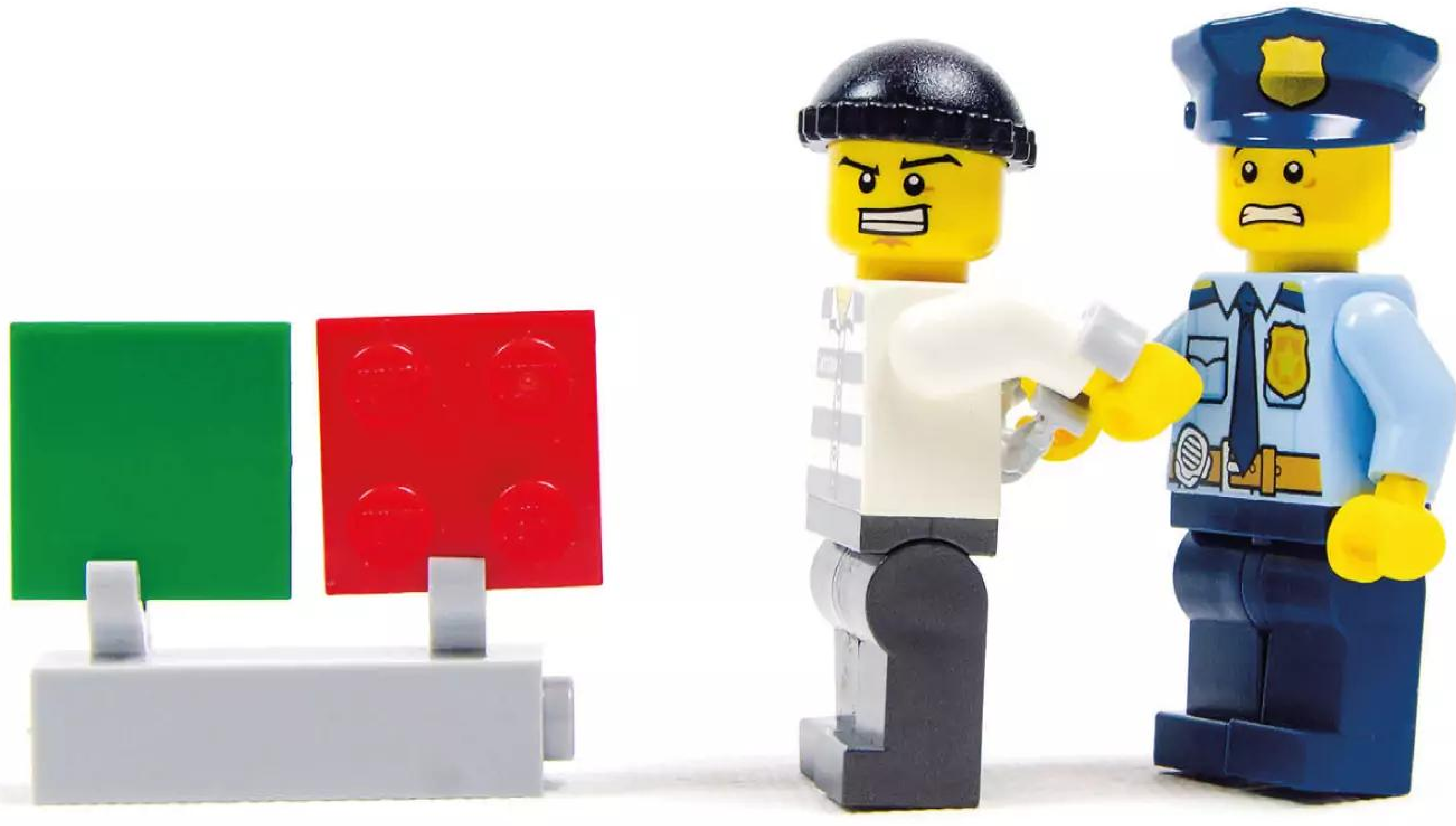
Eventually, as technology and equipment allowed more precise measuring, the ideal clutch power was quantified. Today, it is a top secret number measured in Newtons. Connector pairs are intended to hold together as close to this ideal gripping strength as possible. The LEGO Group has measured and quantified the clutch power of almost every possible connector pair.

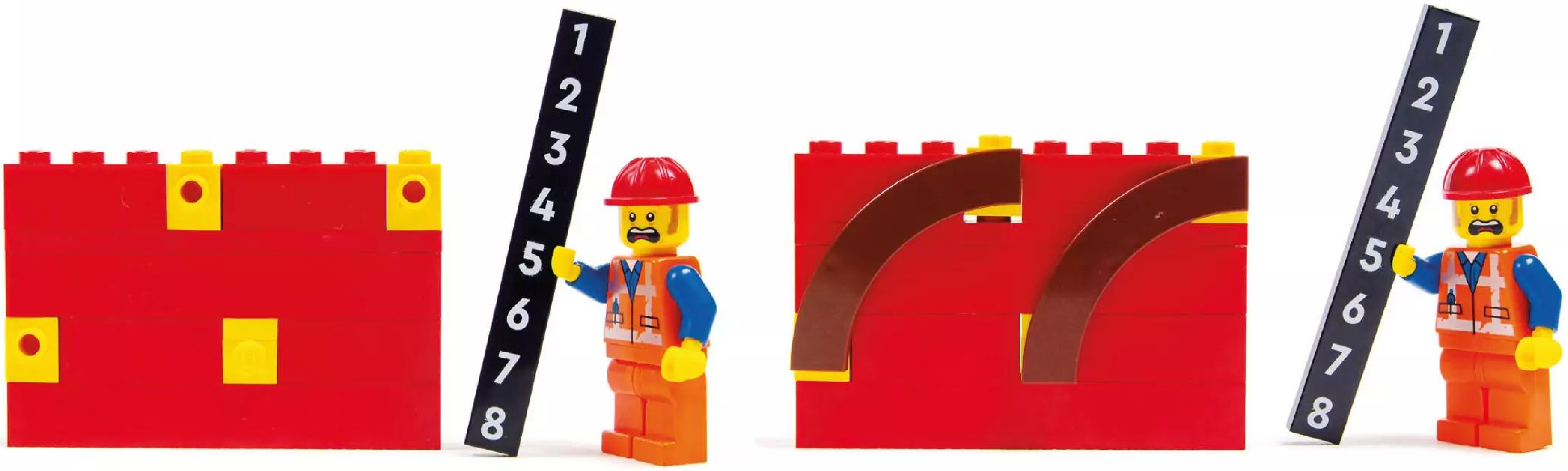
When new components are designed, their connectors – as well as the types of bricks they are designed to connect to – are defined, so that subtle tweaks can be made to facilitate just the right amount of clutch power. Angles may be adjusted, wall thicknesses reduced or enlarged… many other tiny modifications, invisible to the end user, are made to try and create the ideal connector pair.

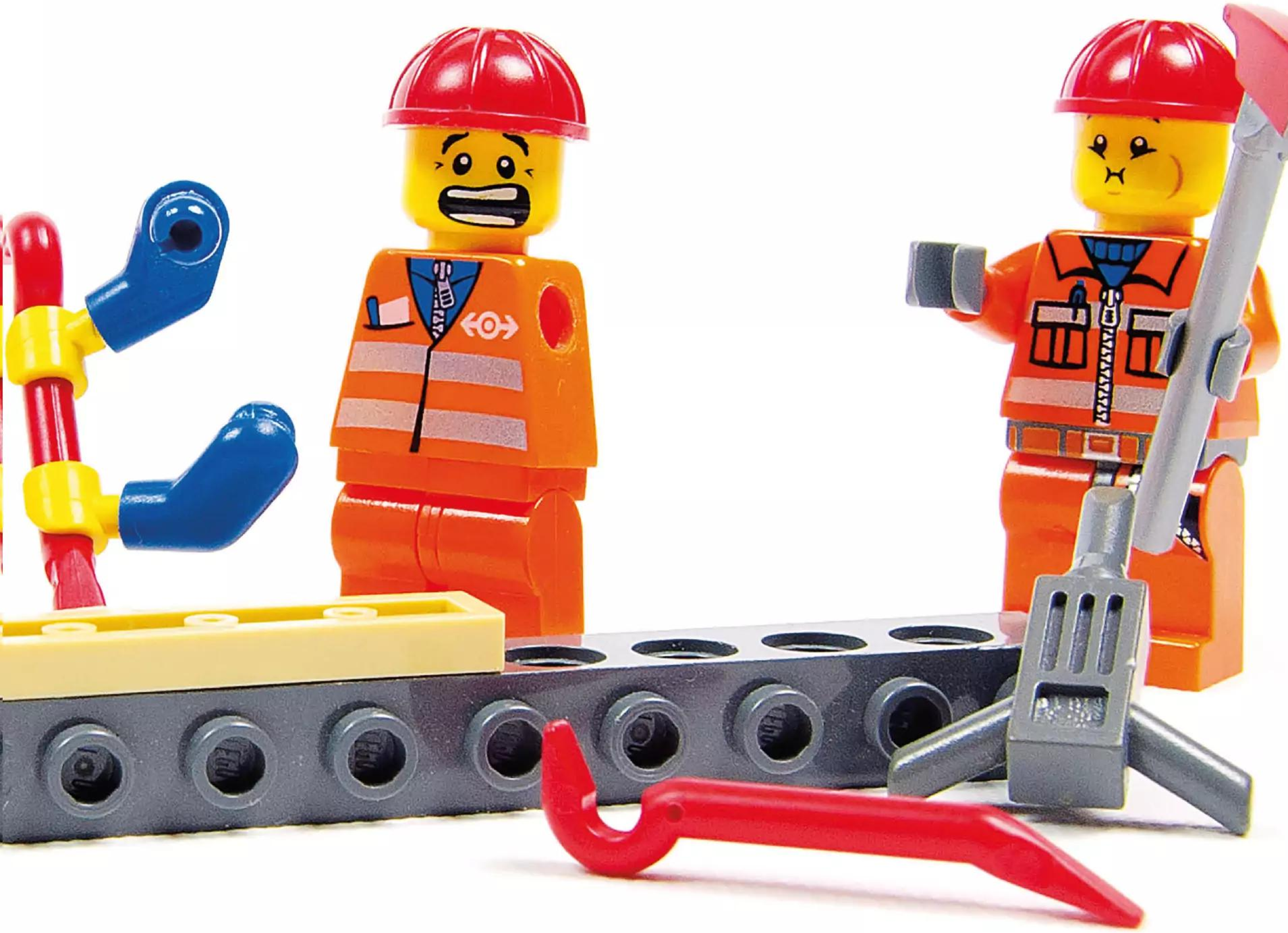
Formally, an illegal connection is when a connector pair has been joined in a way that is outside the acceptable range. These can take a variety of different forms, but there are three broad categories into which almost any illegal connection can be classified. Meeting criteria within any of these categories will mean that the technique is illegal – and it is possible for some connections to fall into more than one category.

"Can a way that you use LEGO bricks really be illegal?"









Top left: Certain connections are illegal because they put too much stress on elements, which can lead to them breaking.

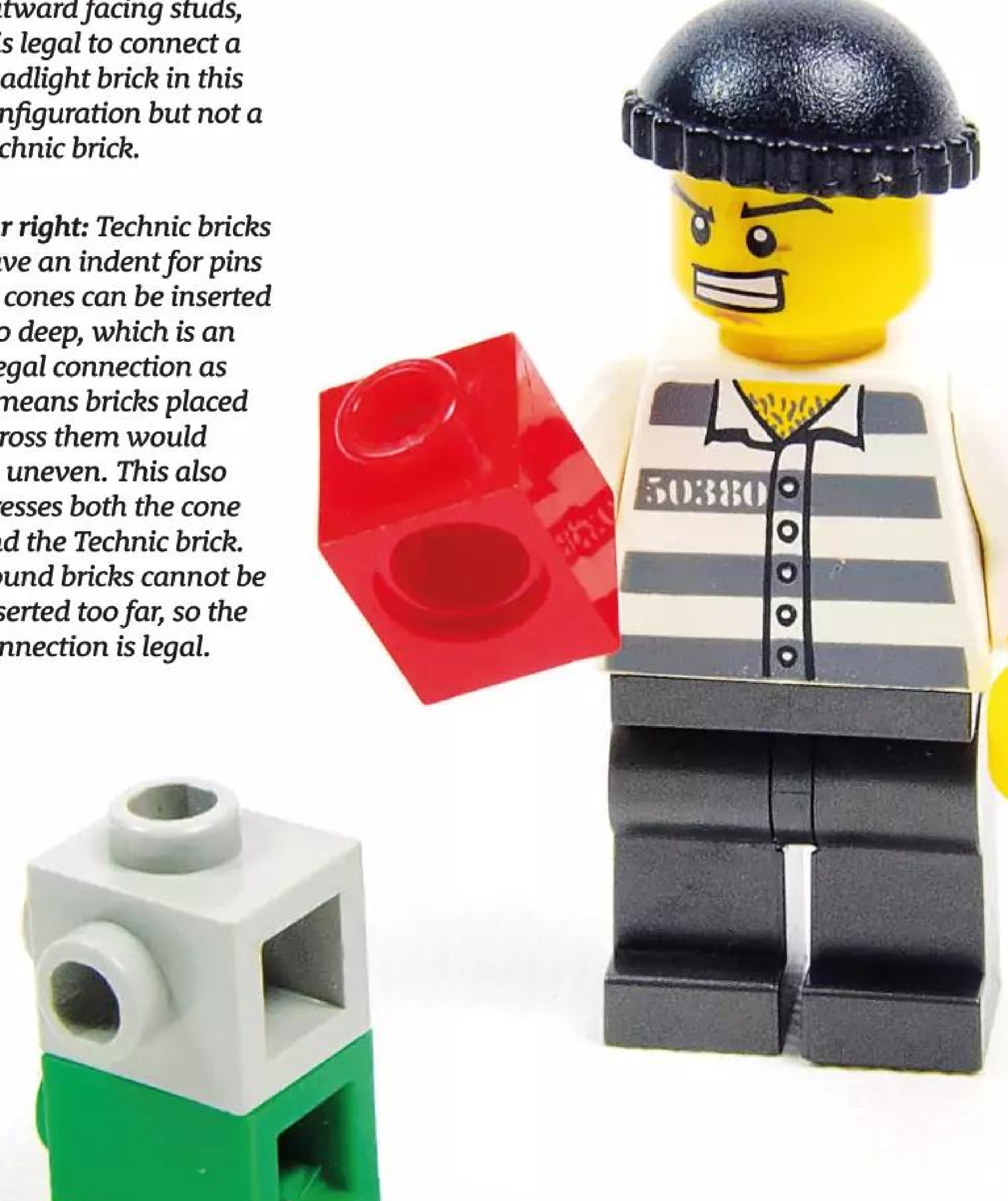
Top right: Tiles are slightly shorter than plates, which means they can be legally connected to a clip.

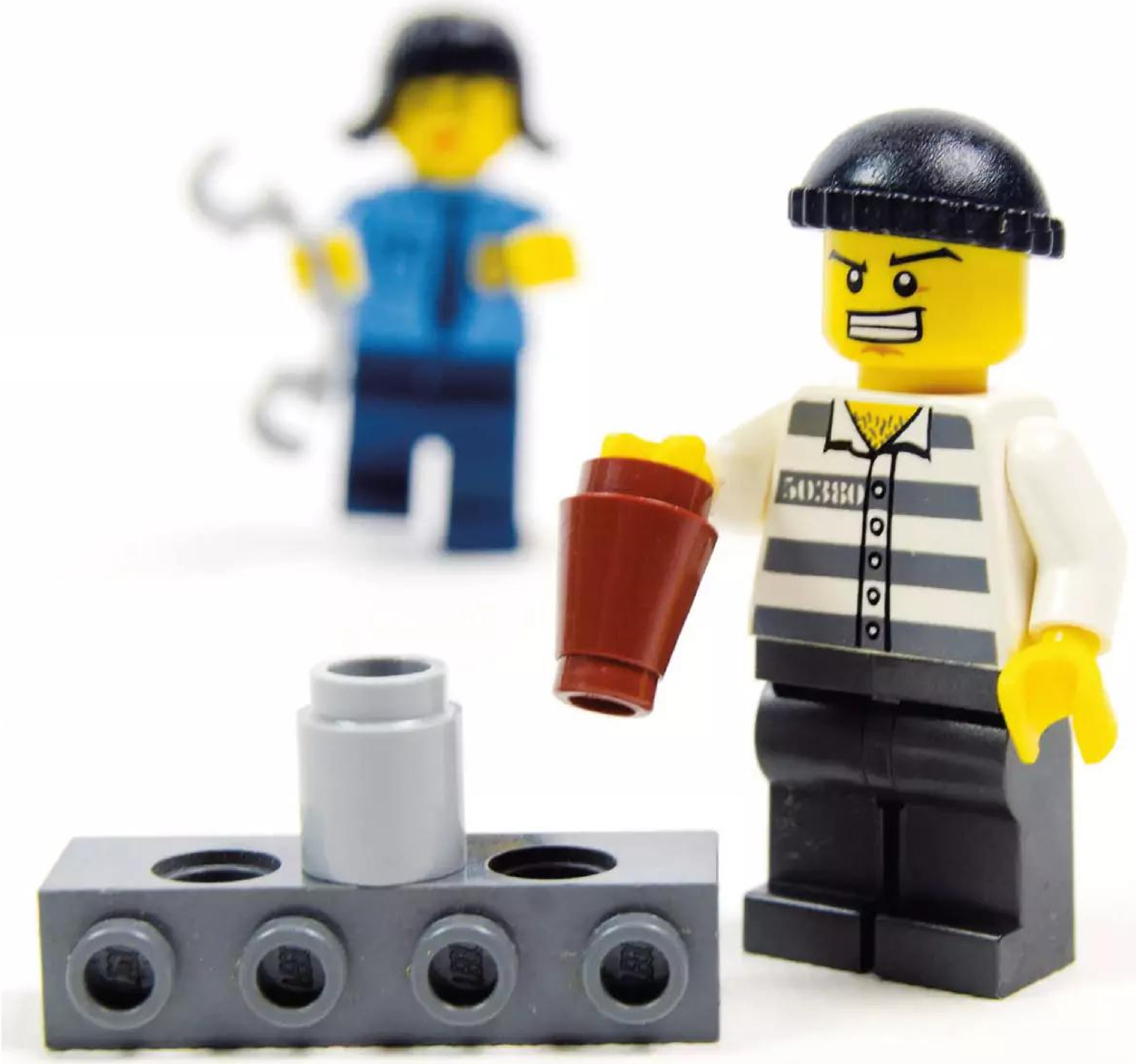
Above: Certain SNOT connections don't quite measure out, which can lead to one of the modified bricks popping out a bit or bending the part that connects to them. Such measurements are not allowed in sets and should be avoided as they stress the bricks.

***Left:** The clutch power is too strong when plates are placed across Technic holes. That extra strength makes separating the bricks difficult, so it is an illegal connection.*

***Right:** Because Technic holes are centred slightly differently than outward facing studs, it is legal to connect a headlight brick in this configuration but not a Technic brick.*

***Far right:** Technic bricks have an indent for pins so cones can be inserted too deep, which is an illegal connection as it means bricks placed across them would be uneven. This also stresses both the cone and the Technic brick. Round bricks cannot be inserted too far, so the connection is legal.*





1 – INSUFFICIENT CLUTCH POWER

Many fans have experienced the frustration of clutch power not holding. Sometimes, builds call for wild angles or filling tiny gaps, perhaps in the service of an organic shape or unusual roof line. Fans concoct all sorts of crazy constructs and techniques to position bricks exactly where they want them, sometimes with elements held in place with little more than wishful thinking.

The result may look fantastic but can sometimes be brought down just by breathing too close. This is fine in a fan build, but if official sets were constructed in such a way, it would lead to frustration for users and would not survive even a gentle play session. Because all official products must be toys first, a variety of connections that do not have sufficiently strong clutch power are classified as illegal.

Many studs not on top (SNOT) techniques used by fans fall squarely in this category, which is why official models use a much more limited range of SNOT methods.

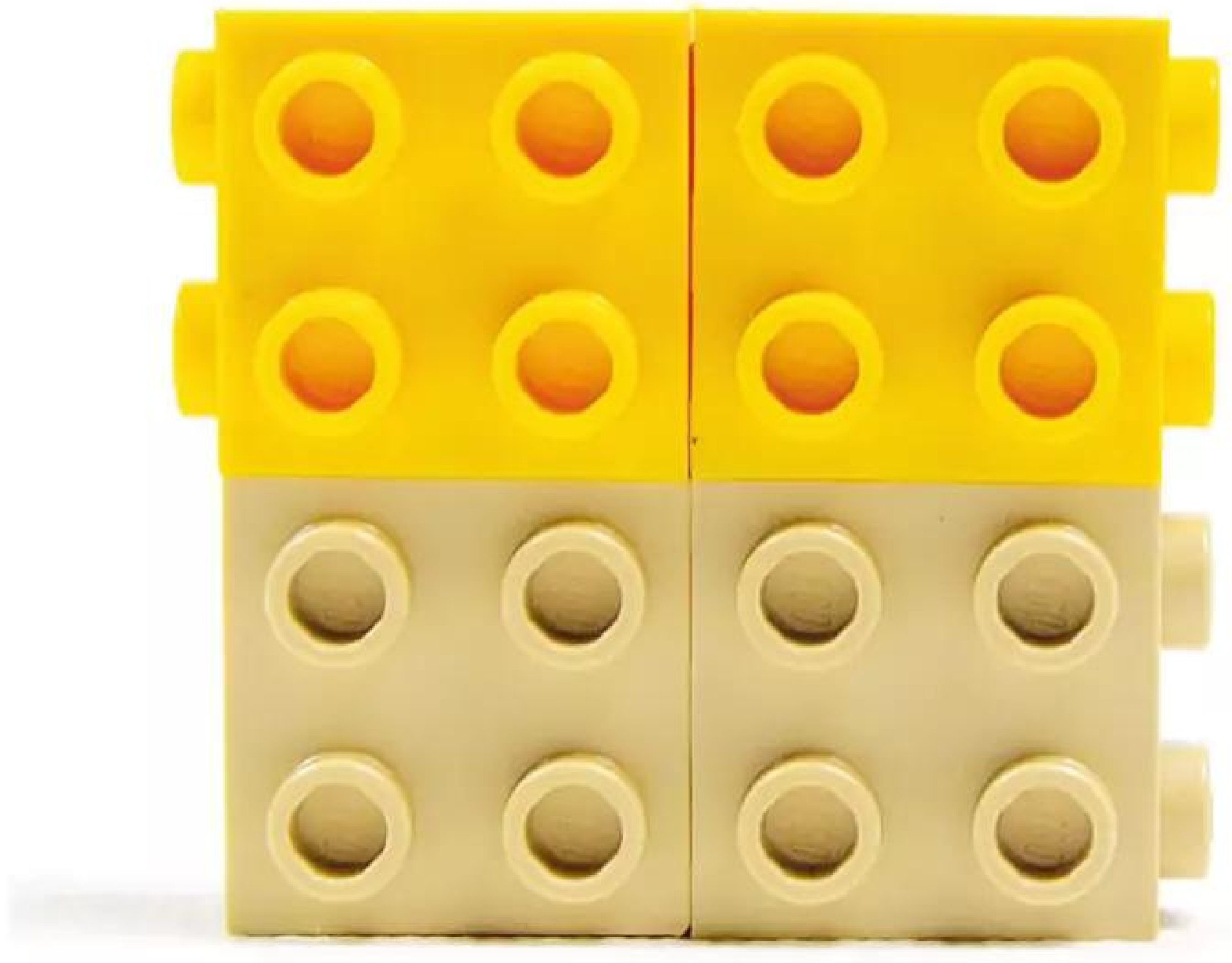
2 – TOO MUCH CLUTCH POWER

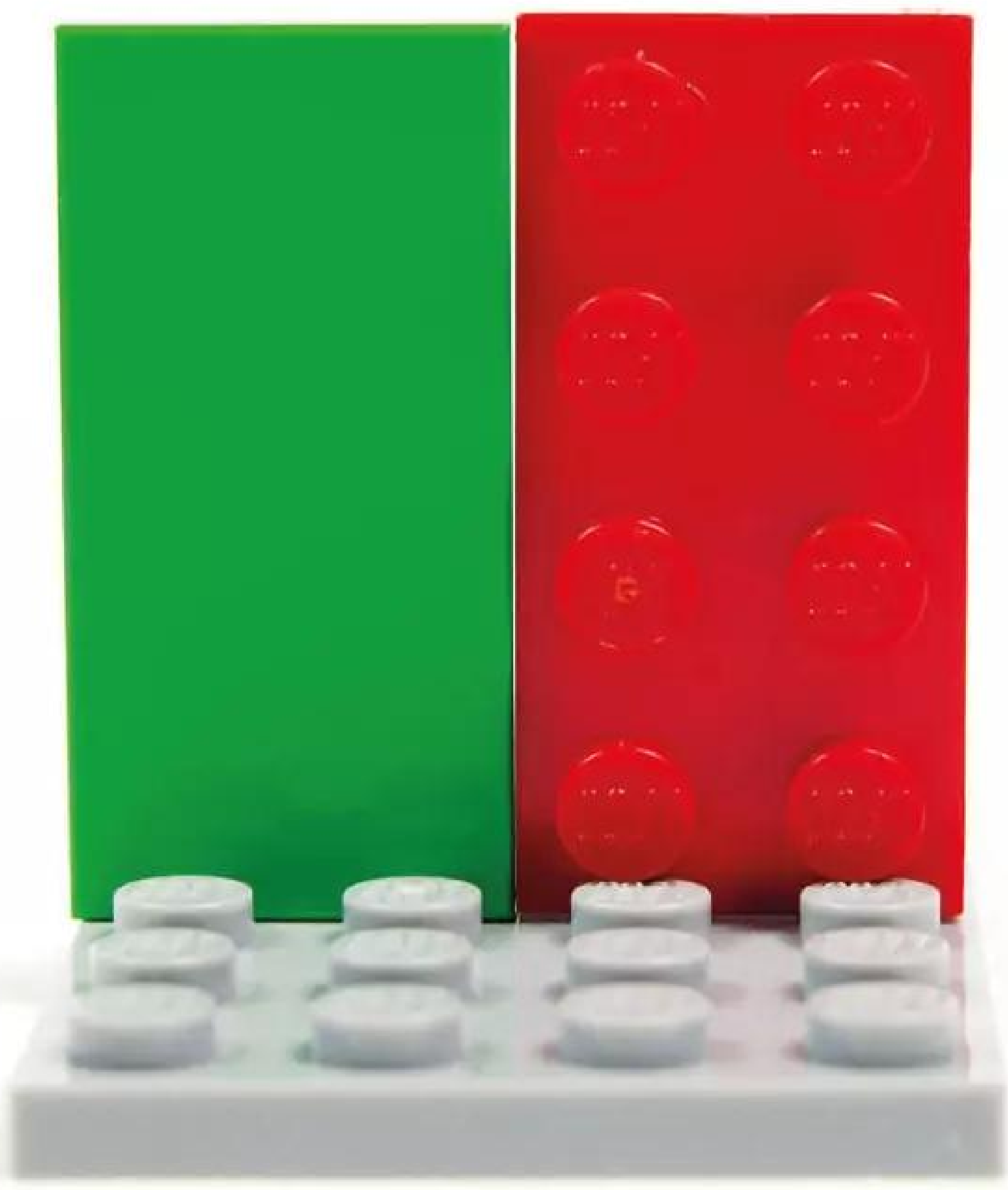
Conversely, it is also possible for LEGO elements to be joined in a manner that is too strong, which makes it difficult to pull the elements apart. This can lead to frustration.

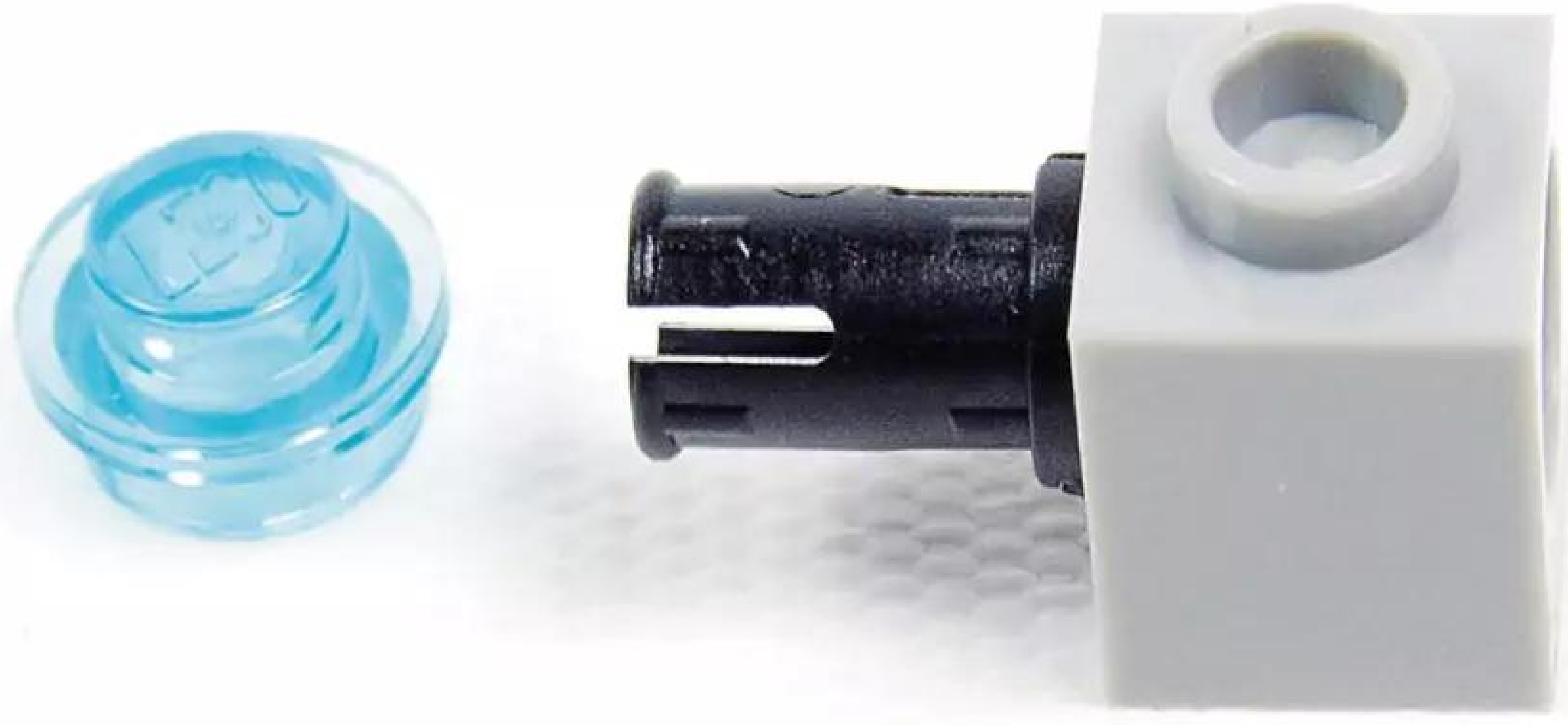
In most instances, this classification comes from elements having too much contact with each other. An example of this is a standard System plate pushed into a Technic brick. The holes of Technic components are less flexible than the walls of System parts, so they grip studs more strongly. More than one such attachment on the same brick will result in clutch power far in excess of the target value.

Another instance where this occurs is when certain parts, such as small nose cones, are slid over bars. Too much contact can make it nearly almost to slide the elements off the bar.

Excessive grip strength can also arise from mismatched plastic materials. Not all LEGO elements are made from the same ABS formula and subtle differences can result in greater clutch power than is optimal.







3 – OVERSTRESSING THE BRICKS

LEGO bricks are made to deform, which is where clutch power comes from. If you stack a pair of 2x4 bricks, the studs below slightly bump out the walls of the piece above. That stretching produces tension that allows them to connect.

Despite being designed with that flexibility, it is possible to stress bricks too far. Parts can be stretched excessively – within materials science there is a range of flexibility known as plastic deformation. This means that anything stretched to a distance within that range will return to its original shape when the stress is relieved. If something is stretched beyond that limit, some amount of the deformation becomes permanent, which can ruin a LEGO element. Certain connections deform bricks beyond that limit and result in either an irreversible loss of strength or breakage.

Then there are parts designed to deform temporarily while connecting, but then revert to their original shape once inserted. The most common example of this is the LEGO axle element and wheel hub. The axles momentarily squeeze together to a smaller diameter so the wheels can be placed, but then they pop back to their original diameter which keeps the wheel from coming off while still allowing rotation. Any connection that keeps the axle in compression is an illegal connection.

KEEPING IT LEGAL

The LEGO Group has a set of internal design standards that classify connector pairs and clearly state connections that cannot be used. How these are published and communicated has taken different forms through the years. They are constantly being updated to reflect new elements and changes in materials.

A group of employees make extremely precise measurements of proposed sets and parts. The LEGO Group has classified a huge range of tolerances and can measure clutch power to an incredibly precise level of accuracy. Sets and pieces are reviewed by this team throughout their development. They are responsible for ensuring that connections do not put too much stress on any of the elements, that nothing is too weak or too strong. Thanks to this system, illegal connections are identified and changed before a product gets anywhere close to a consumer.

Illegal connections are purely the purview of the LEGO Group, stemming from the company's need to ensure a great play experience for kids. Fans do not need to pay heed to these guidelines, though they can be useful in helping you think about when you might be stressing your elements. No law enforcement officers will be coming around though if you choose to slide a plate between two studs!

> "Certain connections deform bricks and result in either an irreversible loss of strength or breakage."

Top left: *Some SNOT bricks only work if they are connected before placing bricks across their fronts. This is because the stud and tube connection between them is needed to prevent bowing.*

Top centre: *Tiles can slide between studs because they are both slightly thinner than plates and don't have studs that can clash. Plates cannot get all the way to the bottom between the receiving brick's studs.*

Top right: *Pins are designed to pinch, then expand once in position. This looser connection facilitates rotation. Attaching something to the end of a pin that keeps it compressed produces stress, so is an illegal technique.*

Far left: *Certain tapered elements can stress bricks that are placed too far down them. The green clip has returned to normal tolerances after being attached to the tip, while the red is in an overstressed state, which could lead to permanent deformation and loss of clutch power.*

Left: *Because there is a uniform hole in the modified plate, neither the cone nor the round brick can be inserted too deep – so both methods are legal.*

Bag End

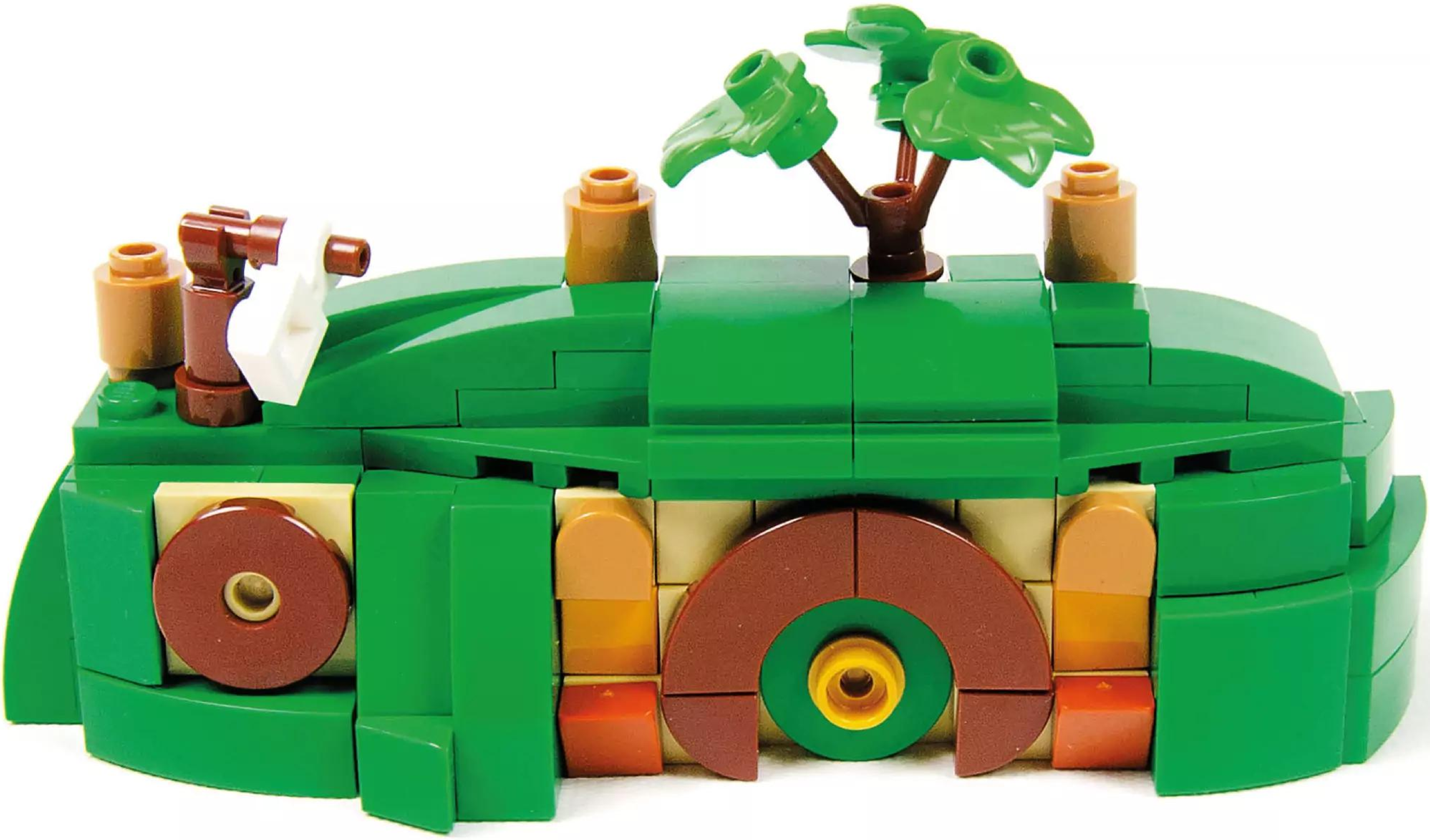
Inspired by the LEGO Group's recent return to Hobbiton, build a miniature version of Bilbo Baggin's cosy abode

With 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire recently taking fans back to where the story began, it's the perfect time to tackle the iconic location in miniature. If you don't have the space or the budget for the big version, then this is a desk-sized alternative.

Bag End's most distinctive exterior feature is its round door and the rest of this build is scaled around that attribute. The door is replicated by a round 2x2 tile with a hole in the middle. Quarter circle round tiles then frame it to mimic the bricks around the door in the full-size model. Topping everything off is a brown flower stem with leaves, which references the tree seen in both the LEGO set and the movie.

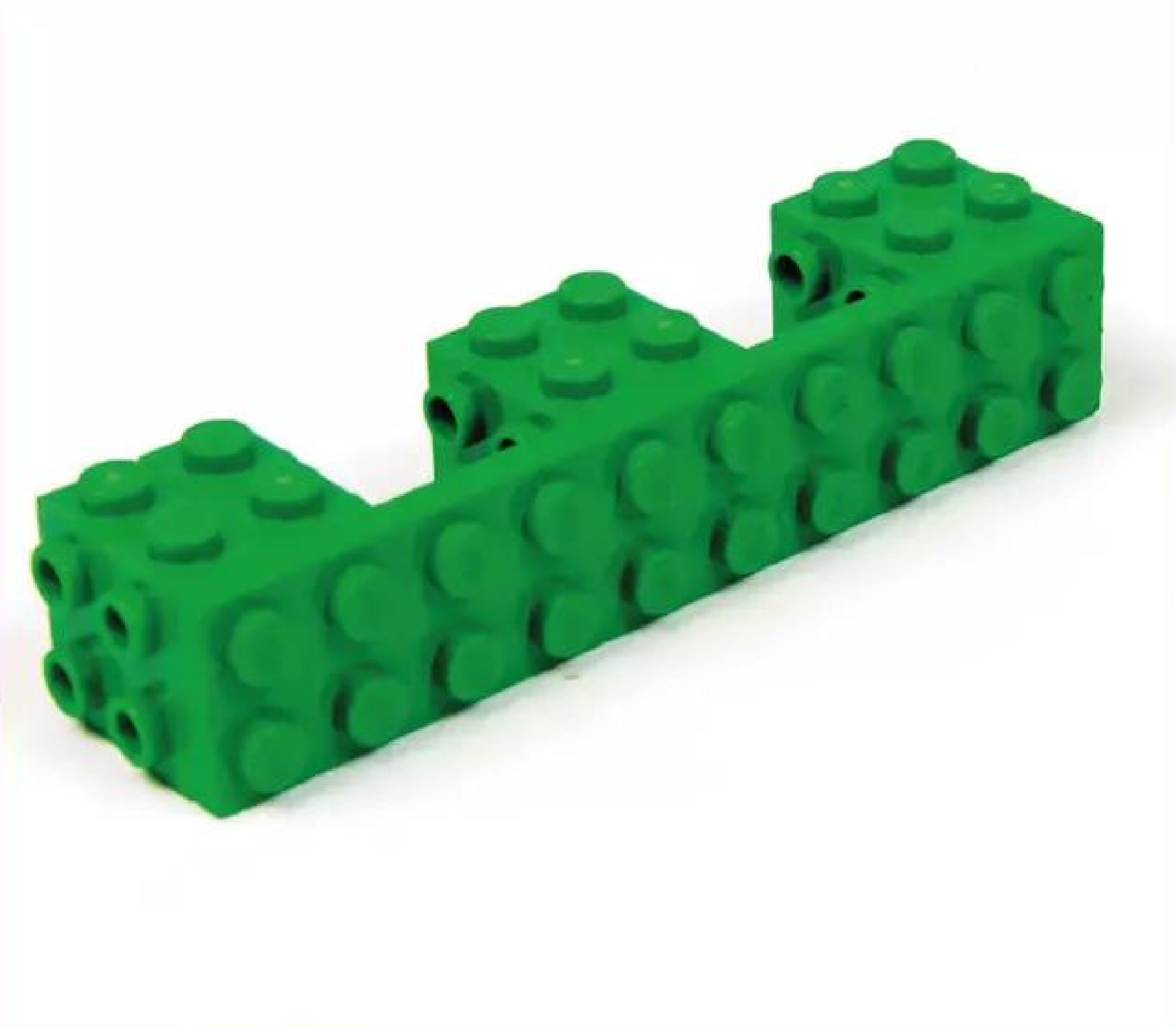
At this scale, you can be more ambitious than the recent LEGO set and build the entire Shire, or even the entirety of Hobbiton. Let your creativity go an epic adventure and see where it leads…

DANIEL KONSTANSKI

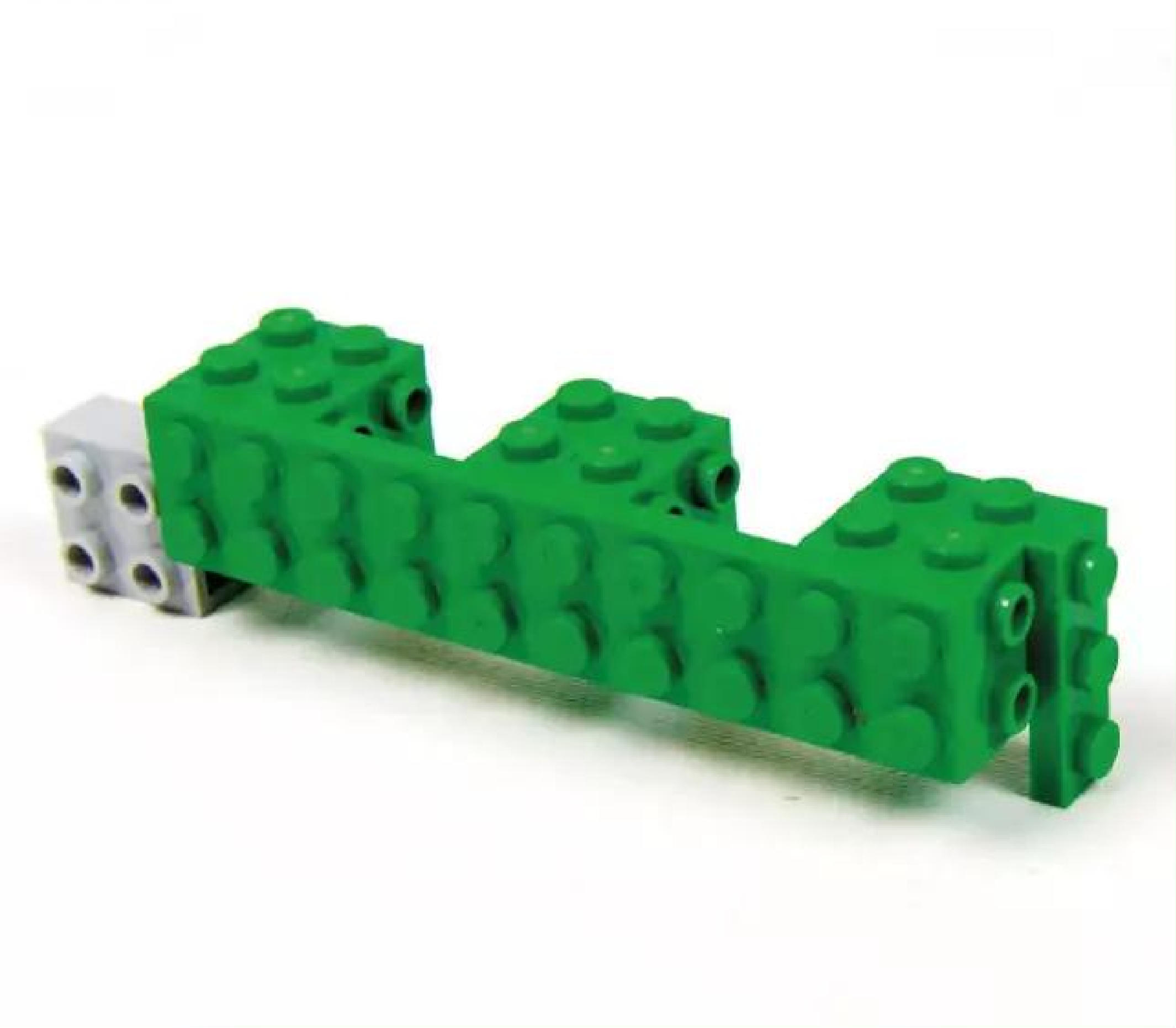


Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/bag-end

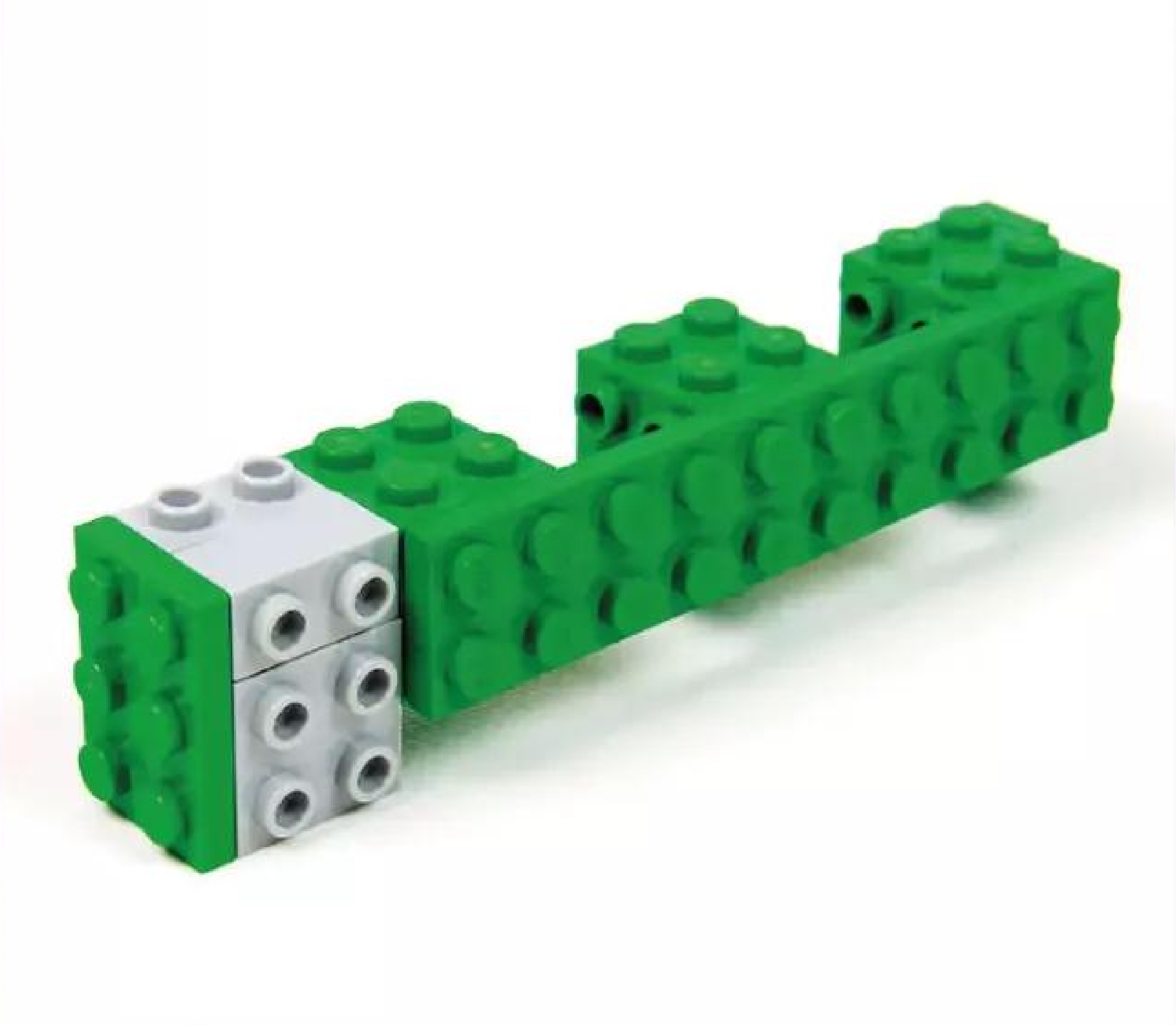
1



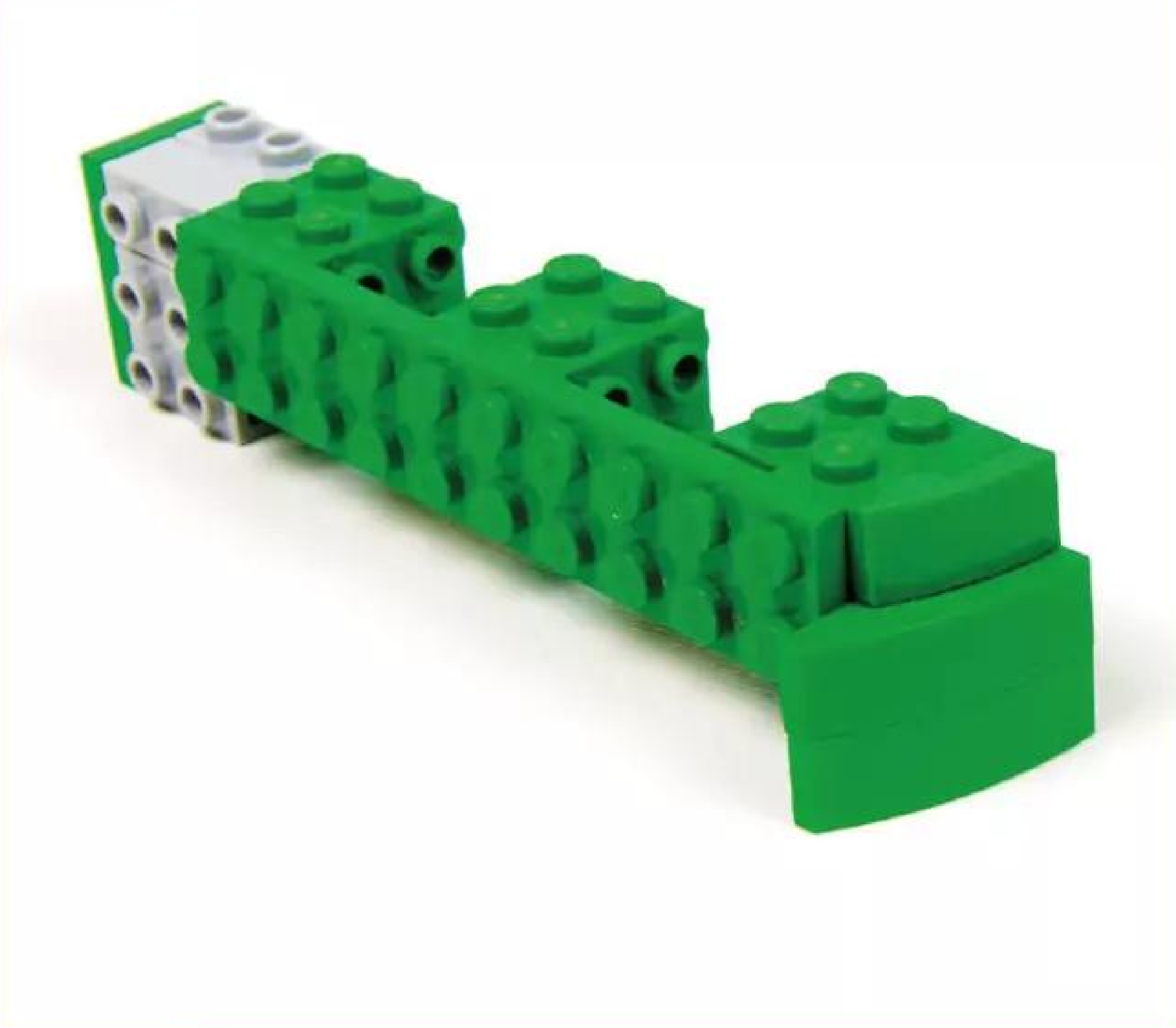
2



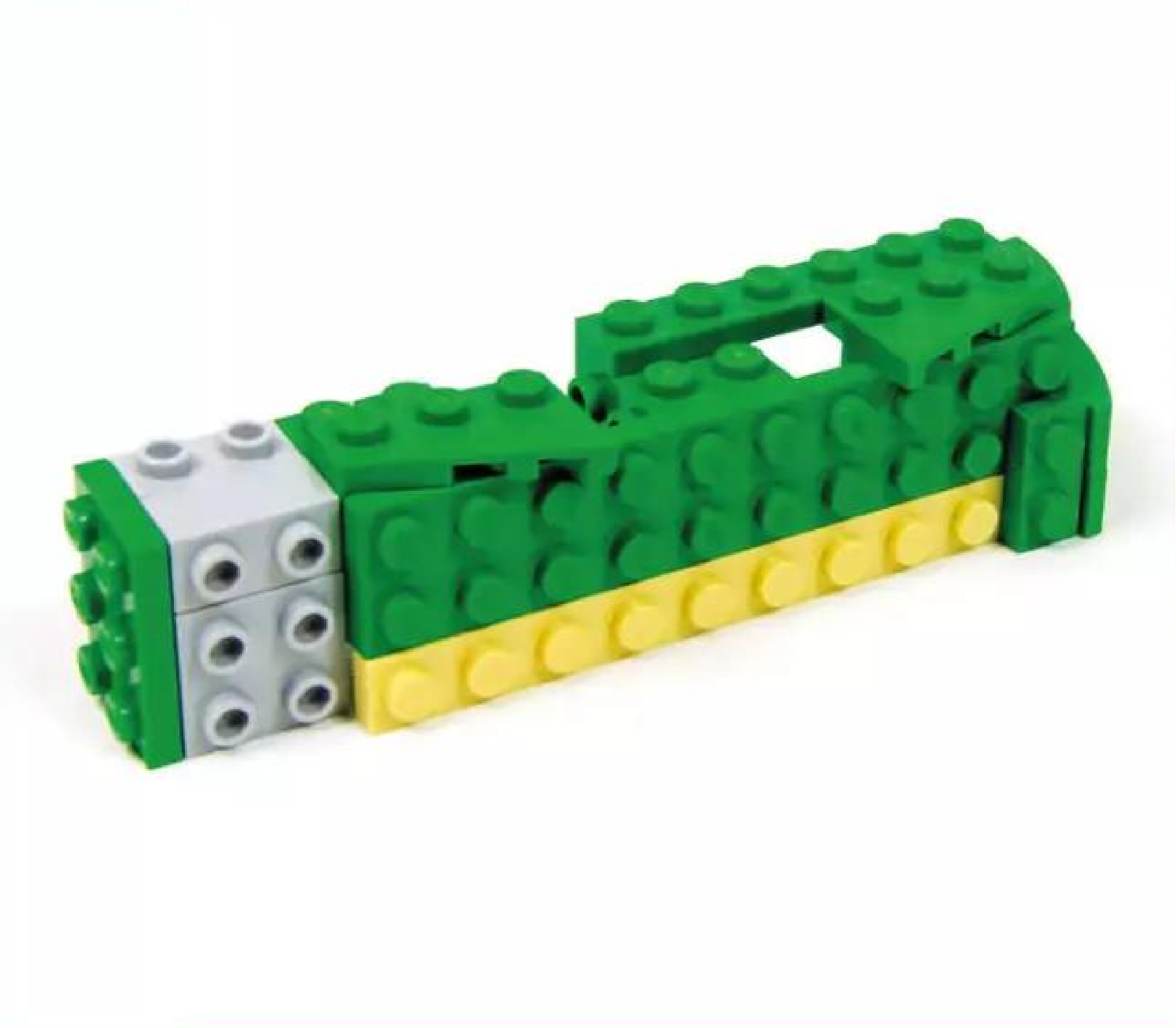
3



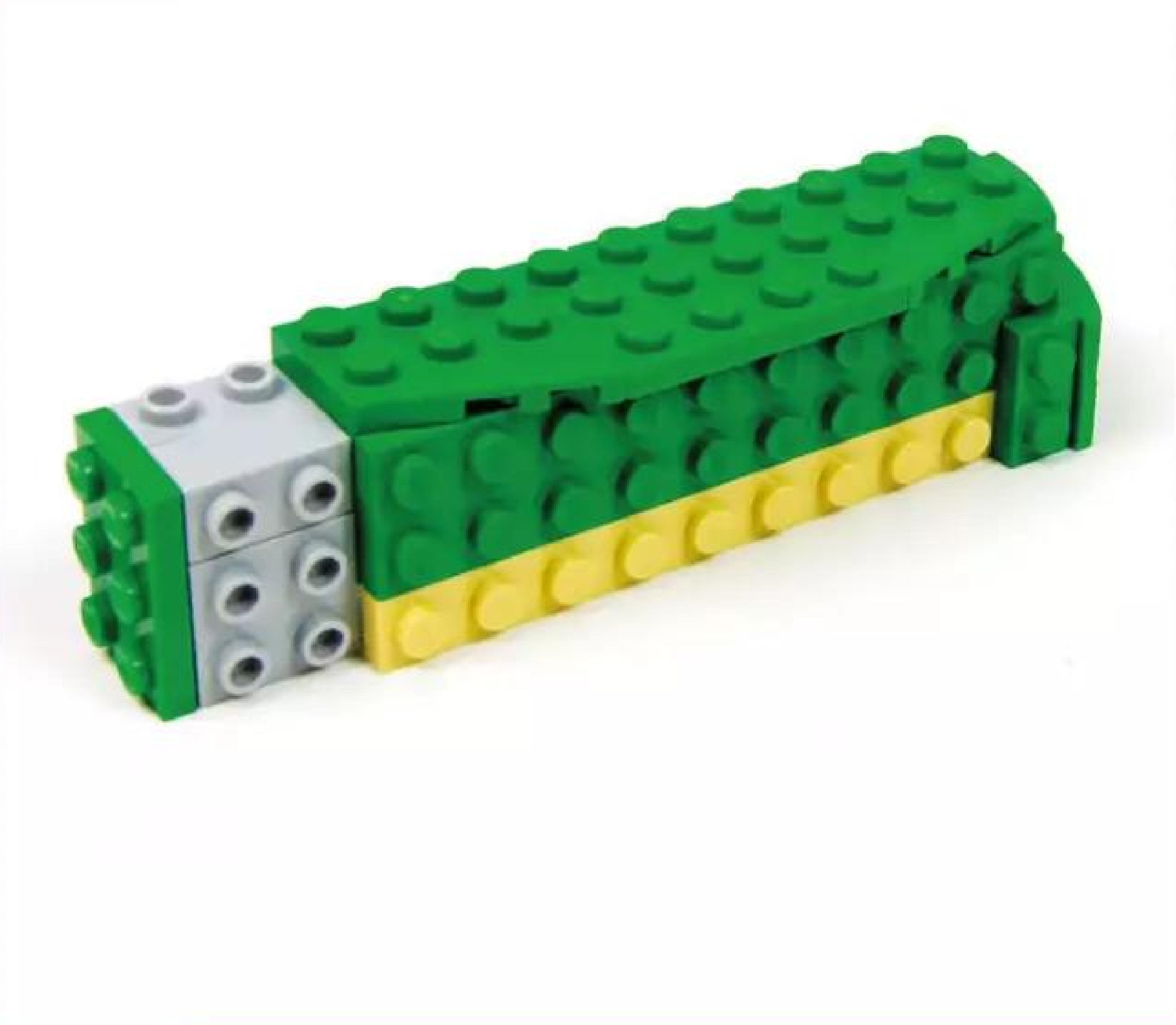
4



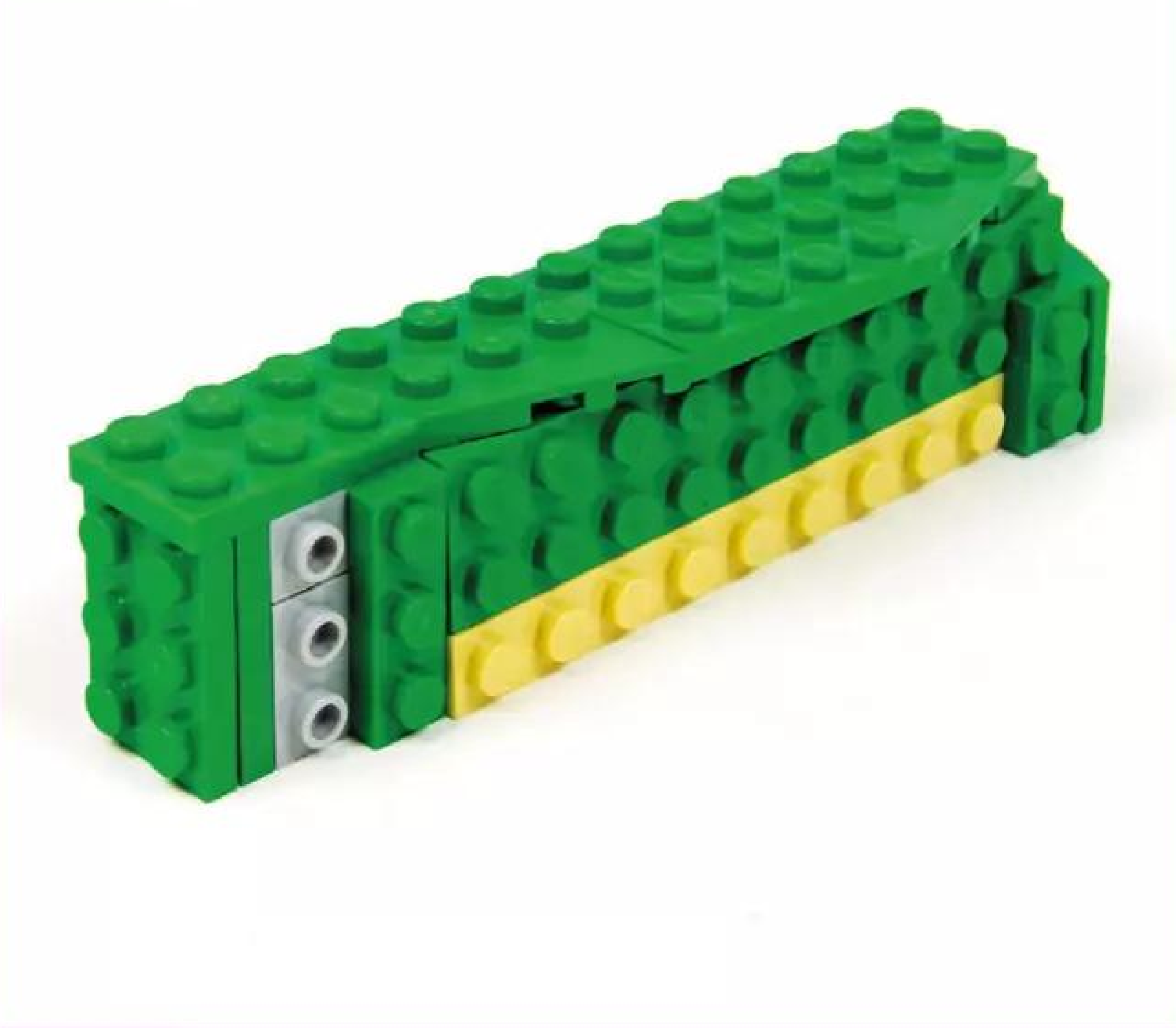
5



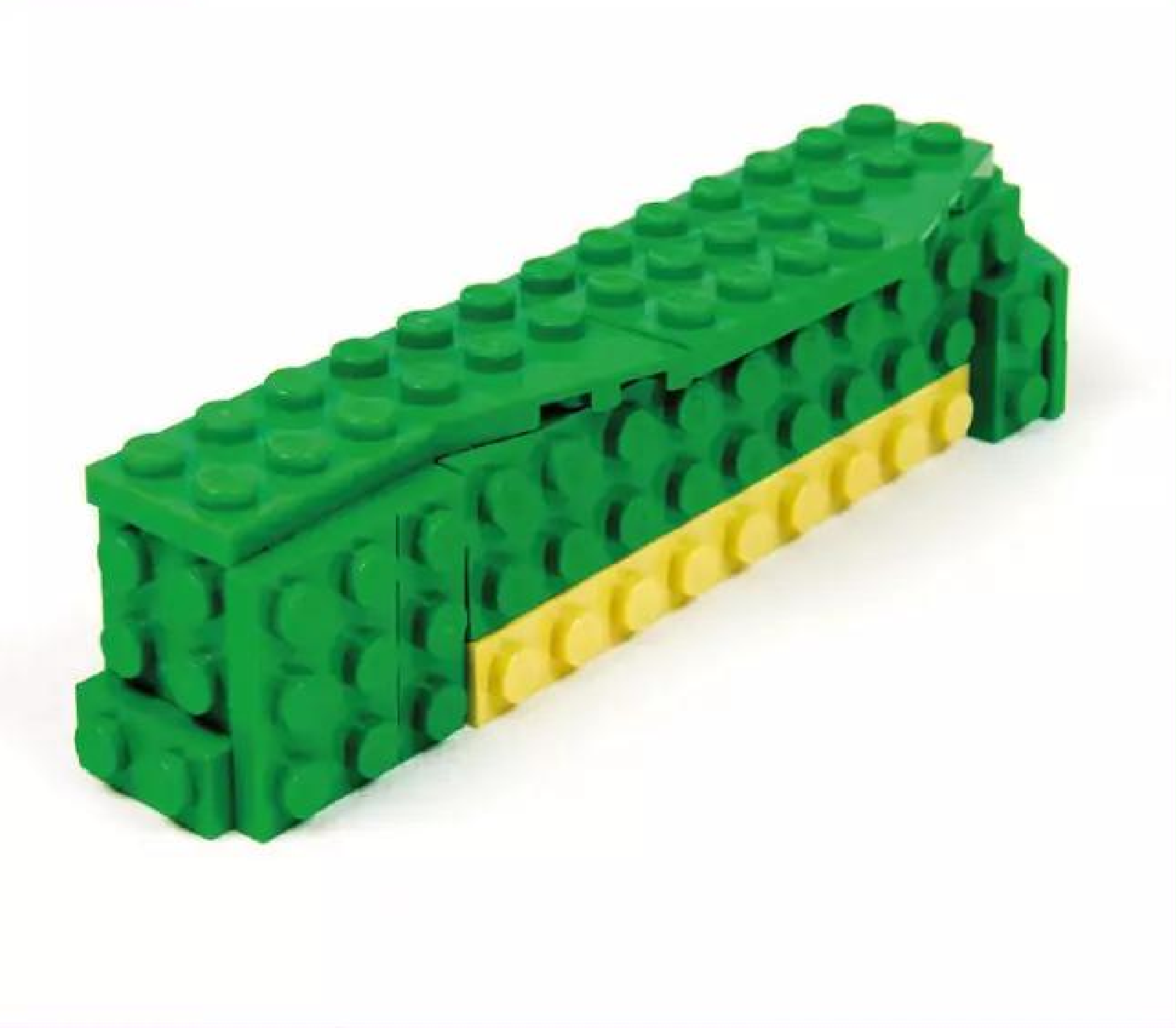
6



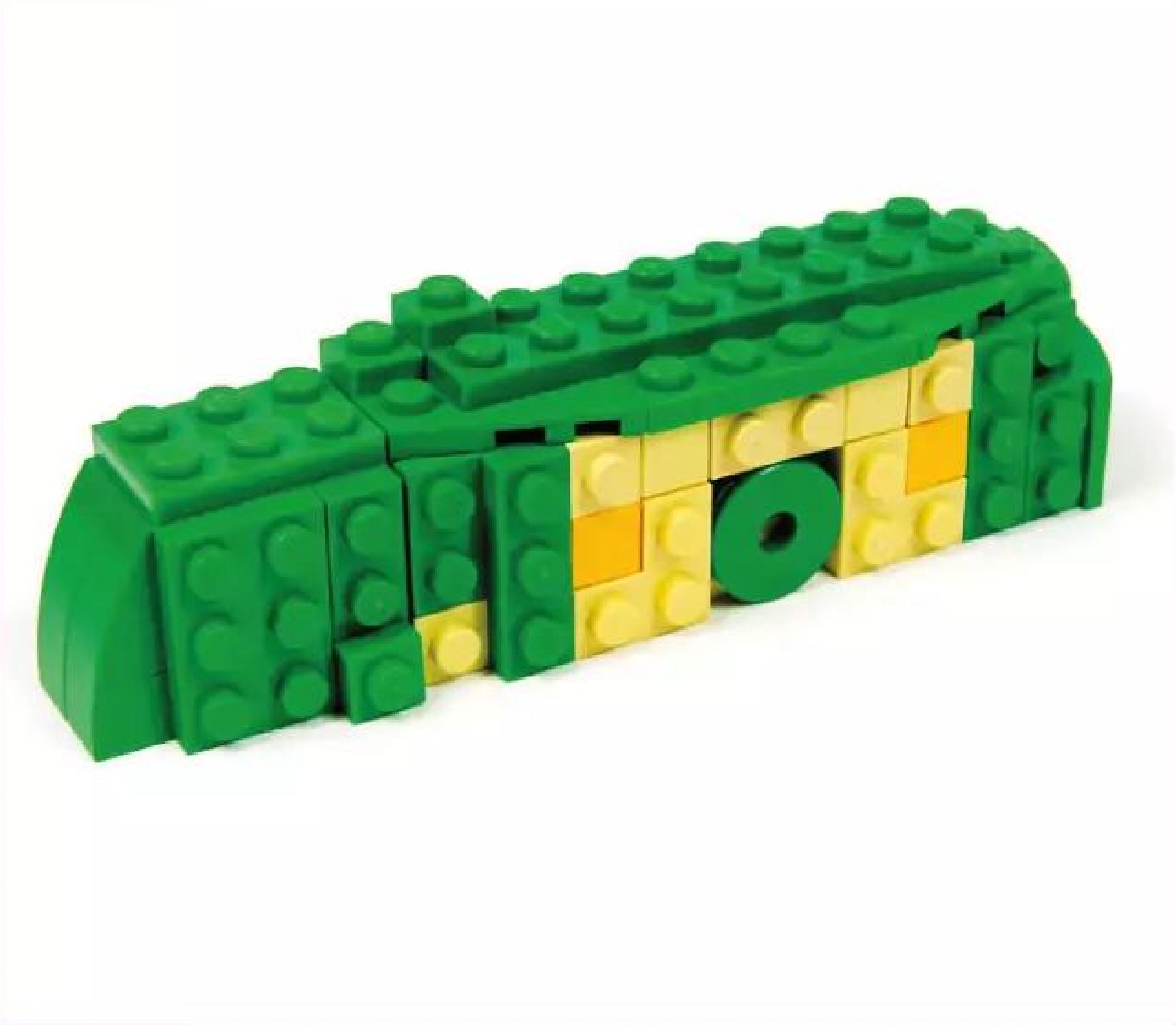
7



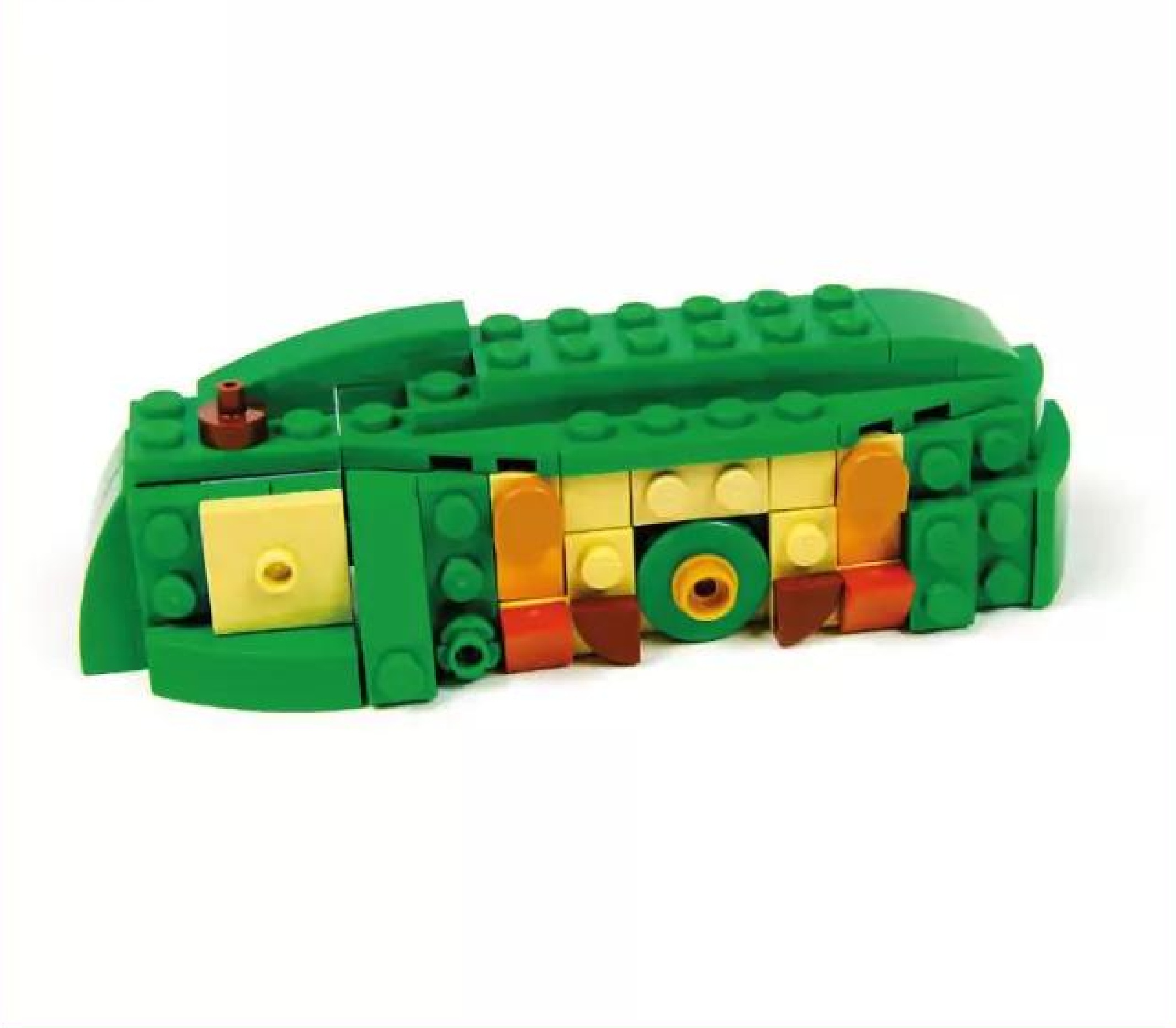
8



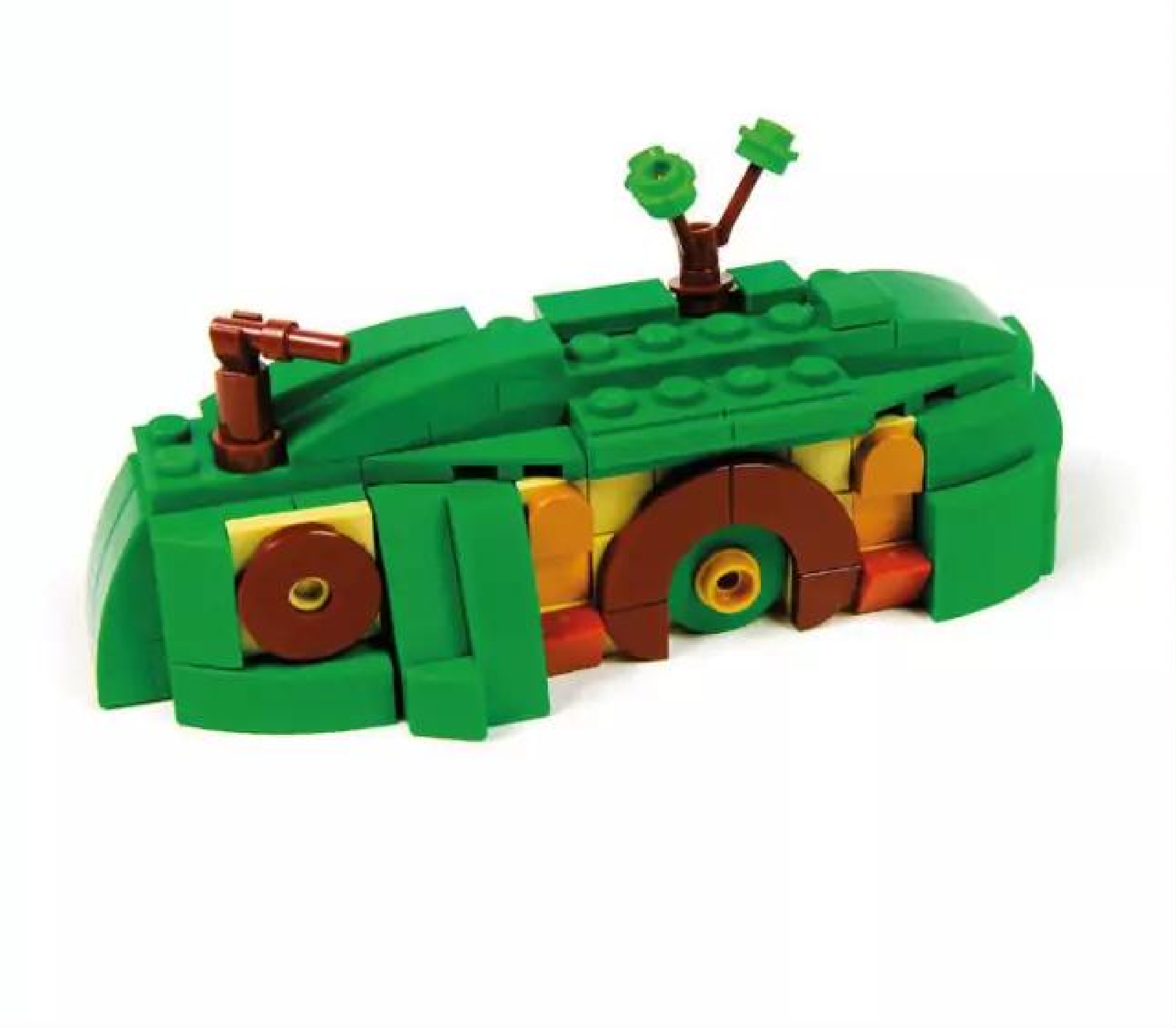
9



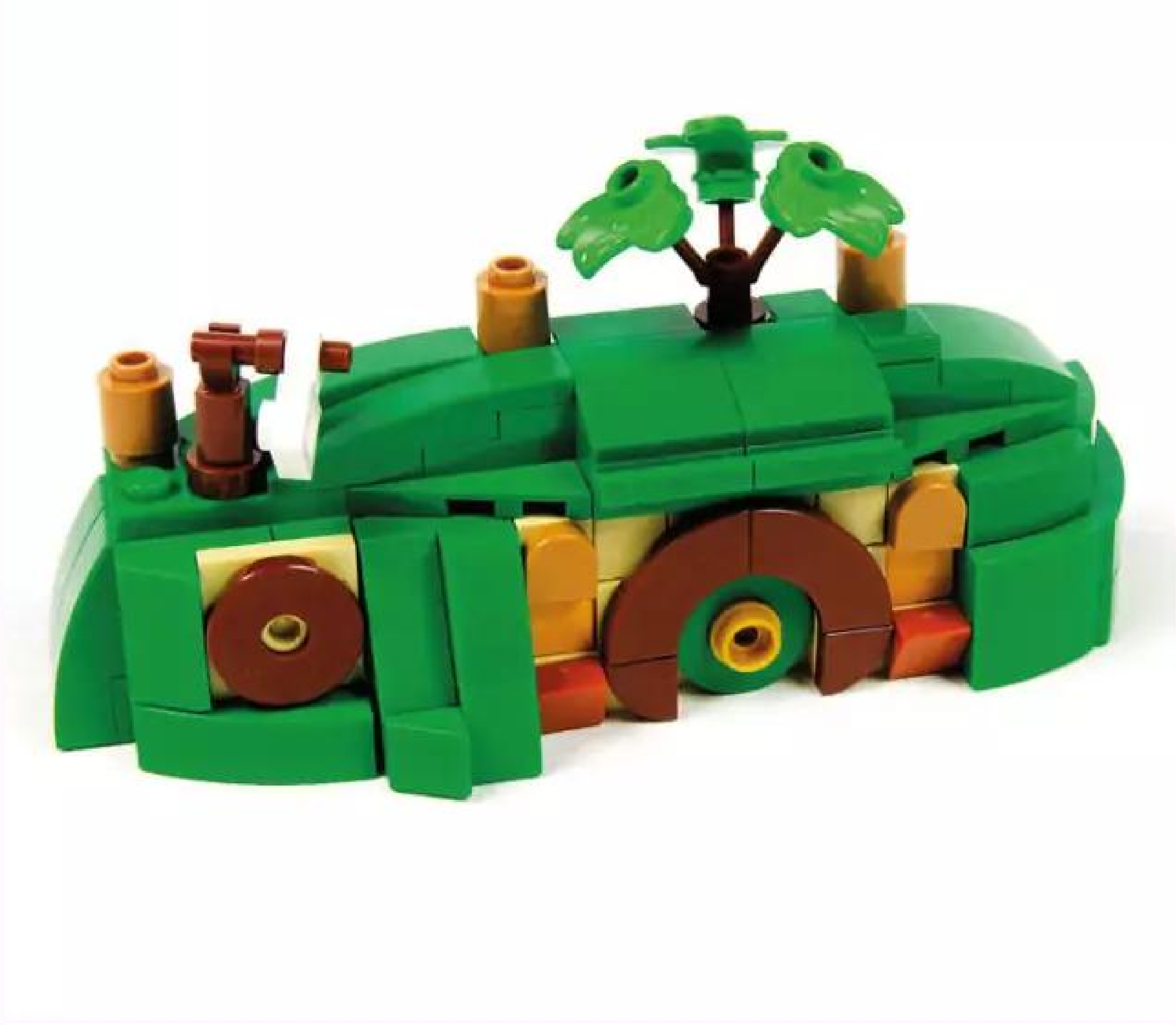
10



11



12



Design Manager Jordan Scott and Senior Model Designer Marina Stampoli.

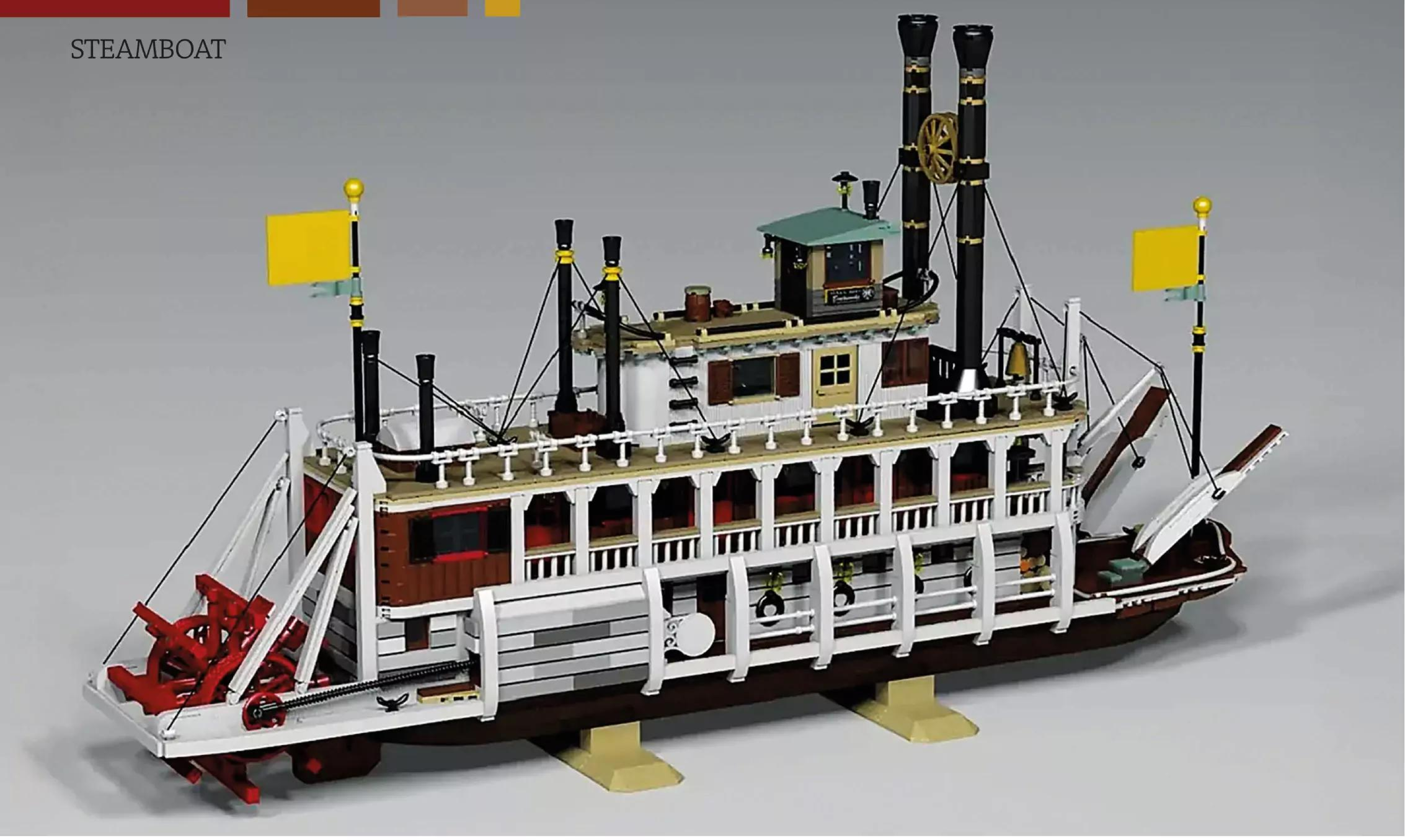
21356 River Steamboat.

ALL ABOARD THE RIVER STEAMBOAT

Senior Model Designer Marina Stampoli and Design Manager Jordan Scott welcome passengers aboard 21356 River Steamboat — the largest ever LEGO Ideas set — and discuss the challenges they encountered as they recreated the iconic ship in the brick

Words: *Ryan Everleth* ***Interview:*** *Graham E. Hancock and Daniel Konstanski*

AMELIA



The Industrial Revolution brought sweeping changes to how people around the world lived, worked and travelled — machines were the new craze, and it seemed as if everything would go the way of mechanisation. River travel was one such target, with inventors and engineers looking to apply rapidly improving steam engine technology to ferries and cargo ships. Early steamships, such as Marquis Claude de Jouffroy's Pyroscaphe from 1783, technically fit the bill, but were incapable of operating for more than a few minutes at a time — not exactly offering a reliable way to commute.

By the mid nineteenth century, however, steamships had progressed to the point of dominating river traffic, most notably on the United States' Mississippi River and Egypt's Nile River. While these wood-fuelled ships weren't the most environmentally friendly way to get yourself downriver, the paddle steamboat fast became an icon of cruising along the water. Even as they gradually fell out of use — such vessels are nearly extinct today — they remain a symbol of times gone by and luxury on the water.

This is the icon that fan designer Aaron Hall sought to capture when he submitted his river steamboat to LEGO Ideas. More than 10,000 fellow users saw the magic in his creation and voted for it to be considered by the LEGO Group, before it passed the official review stage. It has made quite the splash as an official model — with 4,090 pieces, 21356 is the largest LEGO Ideas set to date.

"This is the first time we've seen a river steamboat of this scale," says Design Manager Jordan Scott. "That's why it got a lot of great attention when we were going through the review process and why it ultimately became a set."

"I was very impressed with the details that the fan designer had incorporated in the design," says Senior Model Designer Marina Stampoli. "And I was very happy to work on it, because it was a challenge. I always enjoy nice challenges."

HITTING THE WATER

One of the more interesting aspects of Aaron's initial design is that he didn't base it on any one particular historical model. Rather, he wanted to capture the aesthetics of many different vessels and combine them into a single model as a celebration of the steamboat's mark on history. This decision granted the designers more freedom in choosing how to represent the steamboat in the official set.

"I started researching before starting to actually build a model," Marina explains. "I wanted to get ideas and be inspired by steamboats around the world. I looked at different steamboats from the Mississippi, the River Clyde in Scotland and the Nile in Egypt. I kind of picked my favourite details and aspects of all of them."

With inspiration coming from all over the world, it would have been disastrously easy to have the finished product feel like a cluttered amalgamation of steamboats rather than a single, cohesive model.

"We talked about the storytelling aspect of it, too," Marina continues. "We decided to make it an old boat but refurbished. Then we would use it as a tour boat so we could play a bit more with it and add whatever details we wanted.

"All of the steamboats were in the same time period, but they had different details. The set's interior was inspired more by Nile steamboats, while some parts of the exterior are closer to Scottish steamboats. The paddle was more of an iconic Mississippi thing, being red. It was a mixture of everything."

With the concept stemming from a fan submission, the designers were sure to keep Aaron's original model in mind throughout the process as well – the initial concept is what gives LEGO Ideas sets their ultimate charm, after all. But that doesn't mean that the designers are afraid to make necessary tweaks and changes to get the fan design up to the LEGO Group's high standards.

"When we pick a fan submission, we're like, 'okay, what will we need to do to improve on it?'" Jordan explains. "We have to build it and see how stable it is. Typically we'll see where we will have to make structural changes or reduce complexity, things like that. That's where we began with Aaron's model."

“And every designer also adds their own personality to it,” Marina adds. “It was a combination of that, plus other structural issues that we had to fix, or improvements to the build experience and flow. For example, the railing was originally built in such a way that you couldn’t possibly build it without bending the poles – we had to find a different solution that would be easier to build.

“We talk with other colleagues around the work area, too. We see somebody working on a similar model and discuss it. What have they done? What could I do? What could I add? It’s an exchange of ideas.”

“Once a week we have an hour where if you have an issue with your model that you don’t know how to solve, you can just get extra eyes on it,” Jordan adds. “Because that’s ultimately how you improve models.”

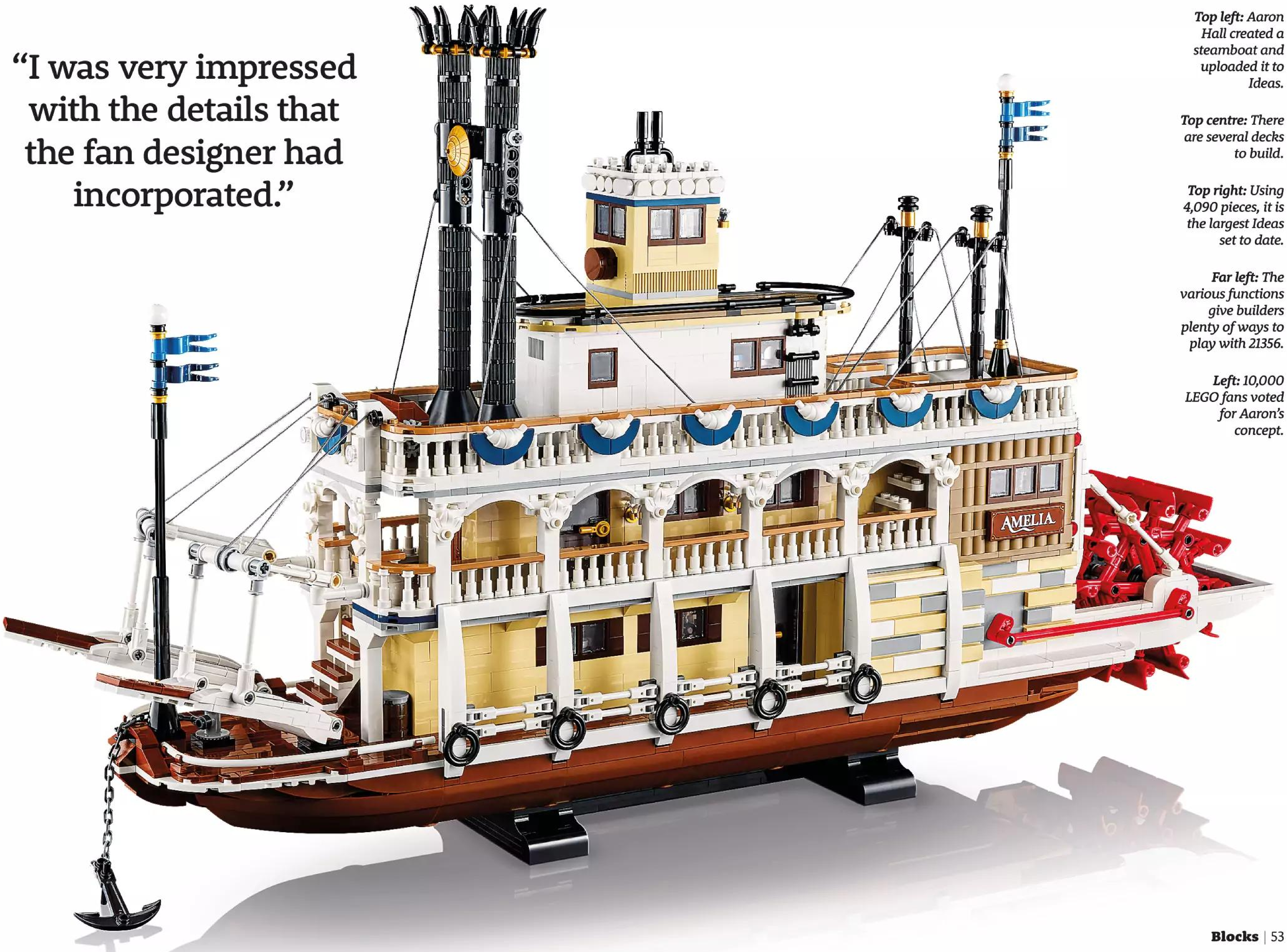
PADDLING DOWN THE RIVER

With the general plan for the model laid out, Marina set to work building — which quickly proved to be no easy task, thanks to the steamboat’s many floors and mechanical elements. The ambitious goal was to have the steering wheel actually control the rudder, along with the spinning paddle, in a set that would also have a full interior.

“If you didn’t have any interior, this would just be a very hollow model,” says Jordan. “So that’s why the removable floors were great, but the structure of these types of boats made that very tricky. Then the added complexity of the functions as well.”

“I couldn’t just start building the boat and then add the functions, because they will not be as integrated as they should be. Then there’s the

“I was very impressed with the details that the fan designer had incorporated.”



Top left: *Aaron Hall created a steamboat and uploaded it to Ideas.*

Top centre: *There are several decks to build.*

Top right: *Using 4,090 pieces, it is the largest Ideas set to date.*

Far left: *The various functions give builders plenty of ways to play with 21356.*

Left: *10,000 LEGO fans voted for Aaron’s concept.*

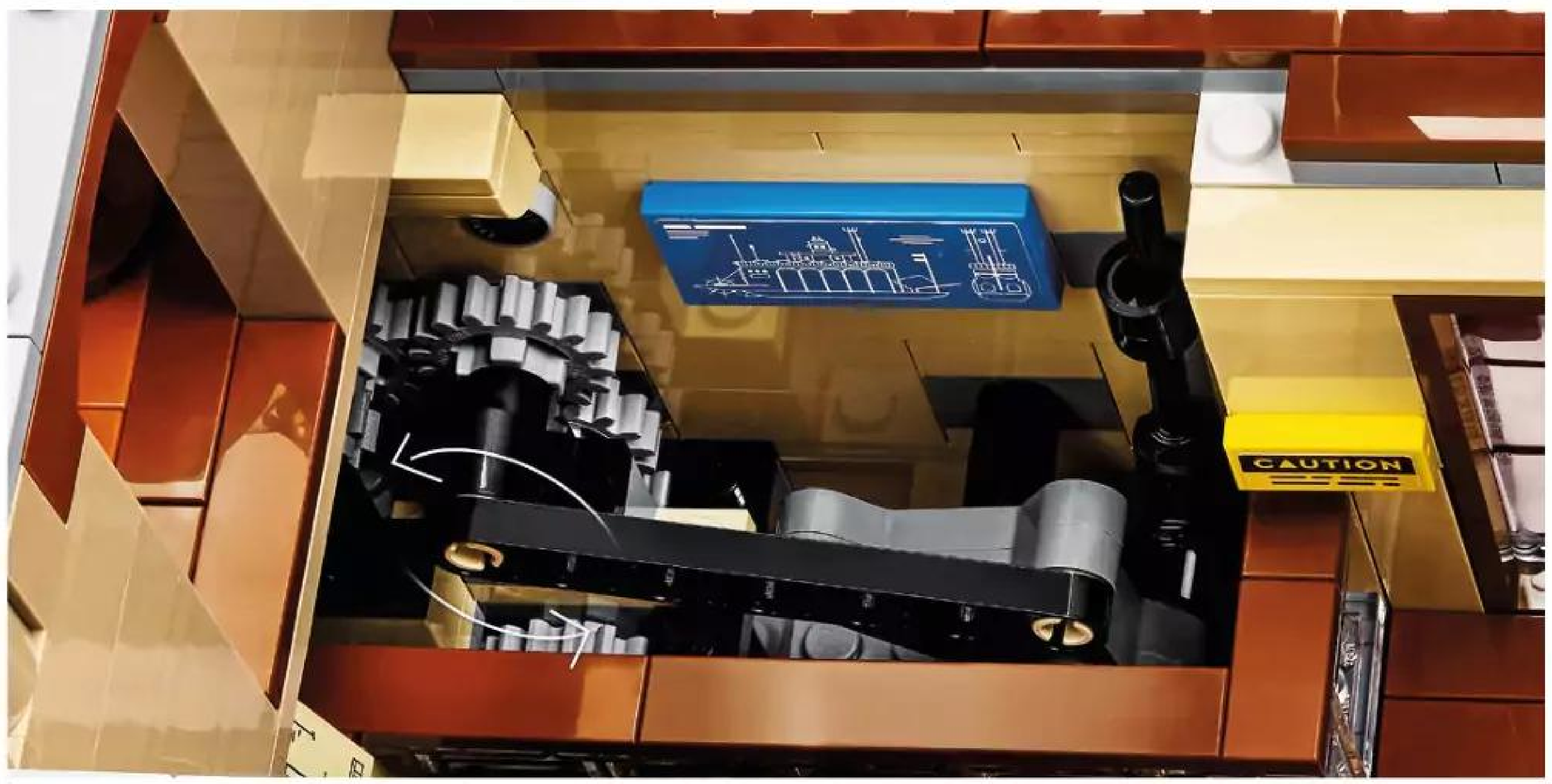
details, as well, because some things may define the scale, depending on what elements we have," Marina says.

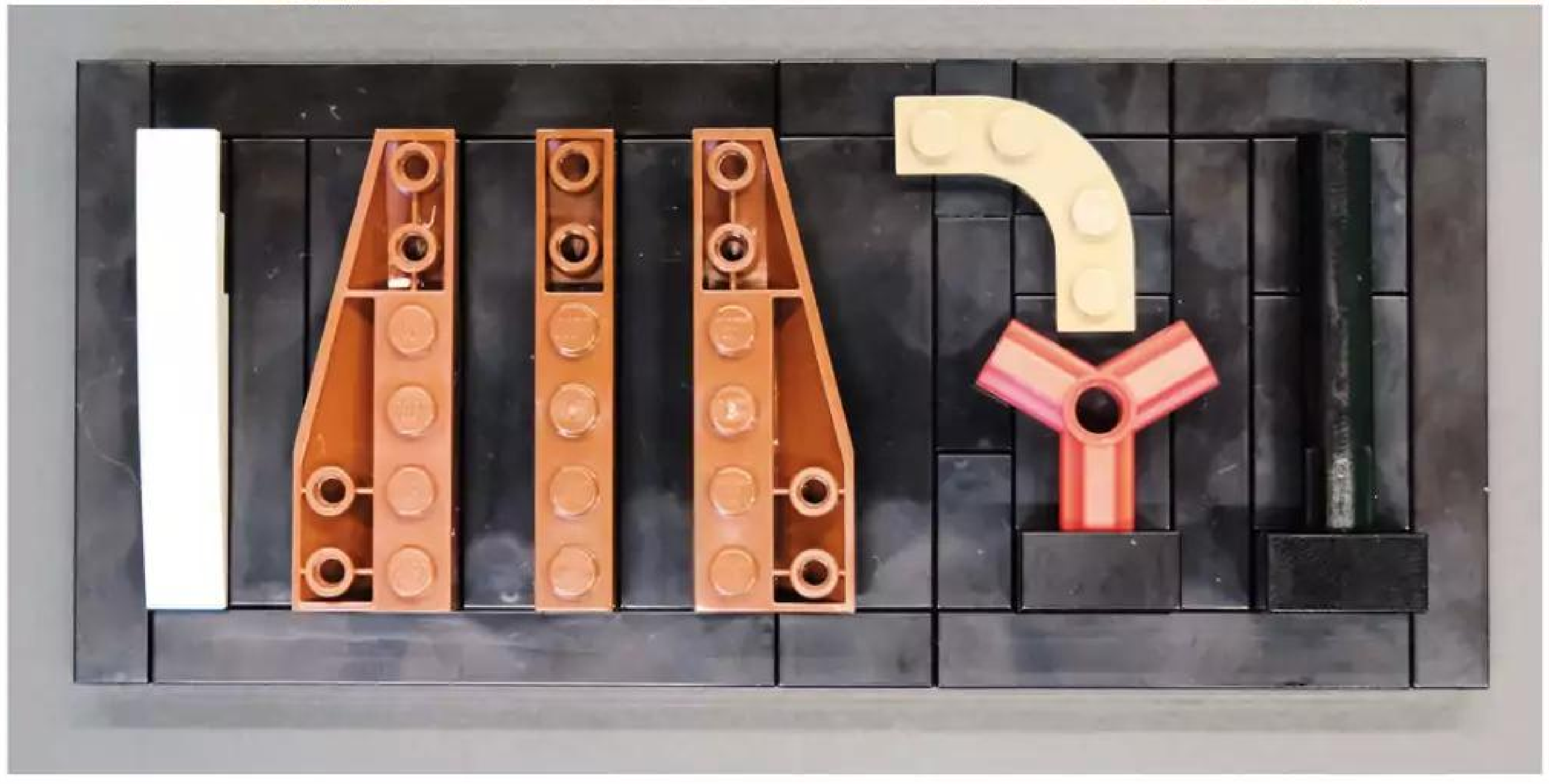
"So I started working mostly on the hull, which had the basic function for the paddle. Then I tried to figure out the function, then what we would add in every floor in terms of uses. After that I started building the floors and thought about the steering function. It's all a circular process… you work on something, then you come back to it, then you see the other side of it."

Between the functioning steering wheel and spinning paddle, the paddle was the simpler mechanism to get working, as it was all concentrated in the lower part of the ship and wouldn't conflict with many other sections of the model.

"There is a single wheel," Marina points out. "And the wheel is attached to a non-friction gear, which makes it always touch the surface, so you always have friction with a wheel to activate the paddle. That was a bit difficult to achieve, because it needed to not be too low, but not too high, and at the same time, it should always be touching the table or floor."

The mechanism Marina settled on, involving the single wheel and a series of four gears, was based on 21317 Steamboat Willie, a LEGO Ideas set from 2019. 21317 used a similar technique to have its paddles move, though its paddles were placed on the sides and built at a much smaller





IDEAS ON THE WATER

Several other LEGO Ideas sets have made a splash through the years…

21306
The Beatles Yellow Submarine

Inspired by the 1968 movie that was itself inspired by the Beatles' 1966 hit, 21306 The Beatles Yellow Submarine is a colourful model that looks as it has been pulled from an animation still. Despite being a model that's most likely to stay on display, it includes two rotating propellers, four periscopes and an adjustable rudder.

21310
Old Fishing Store

How do you craft a weathered building using LEGO elements? 21310 Old Fishing Store offers a masterclass in doing just that, depicting a ramshackle building that has clearly been battered by the extreme weather that you get on the coastline. It gives the store a rustic charm, which is further enhanced by the various aspects of life on the sea that have been added to the exterior, such as the ship's wheel.

21313
Ship in a Bottle

Building small scale ships with LEGO elements is tricky, as getting the shaping requires detailed knowledge of the System. 21313 Ship in a Bottle manages to craft a seafaring vessel with minimal parts, before you move onto building a bottle using transparent parts. As if the process hasn't been varied enough, you complete it by constructing the elegant display stand.

21317
Steamboat Willie

So similar, yet so different. This classic Ideas set doesn't depict a realistic steamboat, instead it takes inspiration from the first ever Mickey Mouse cartoon – Steamboat Willie. Not only are the proportions of the vessel exaggerated and contorted to match the animation, but the entire set is built in greyscale to represent what audiences know from the historic piece of filmmaking.

scale. It still proved an invaluable reference for Marina as she worked on the River Steamboat.

But the most difficult task was still ahead — engineering a way for the steering wheel to turn the rudder. On its own, it's not too complicated of an idea, simply requiring Technic elements and some engineering know-how. But in practice, it was a much trickier.

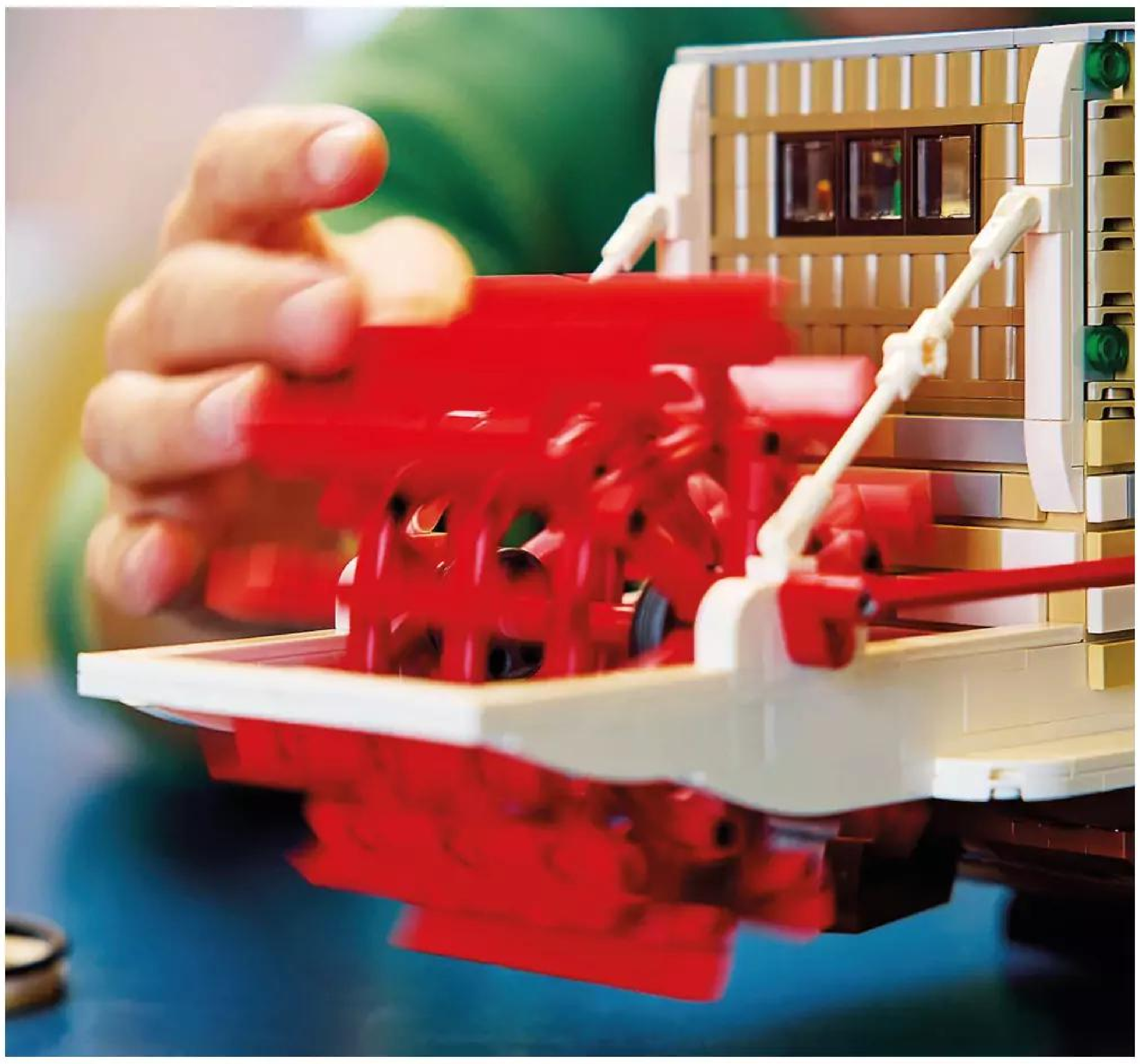
"The most challenging part was to combine that idea with removable floors while still making it a nice experience for the builder, so that when you remove the floors, you don't have to remove a lot of pieces or get too confused about it," Marina recalls.

Ultimately, in order to get the mechanism to work, she had to have a new Technic connector element designed for the set. That piece has a typical firm connection at the top, but a loose connection at the bottom so it smoothly lifts off the piece it's sitting over. Entirely new elements are a last resort for solving such issues, as it's much more economical to use an existing piece instead of going through the process of requesting and producing a new one.

Designers have to contend with limits on how many new elements they can request, as adding a new element to the LEGO System is no small task. The LEGO Ideas team in particular don't always know what sort of new pieces they'll need in the future, so they typically try and reserve new part requests for special characters, such as the unique head pieces for the Winnie the Pooh and Sesame Street minifigures.

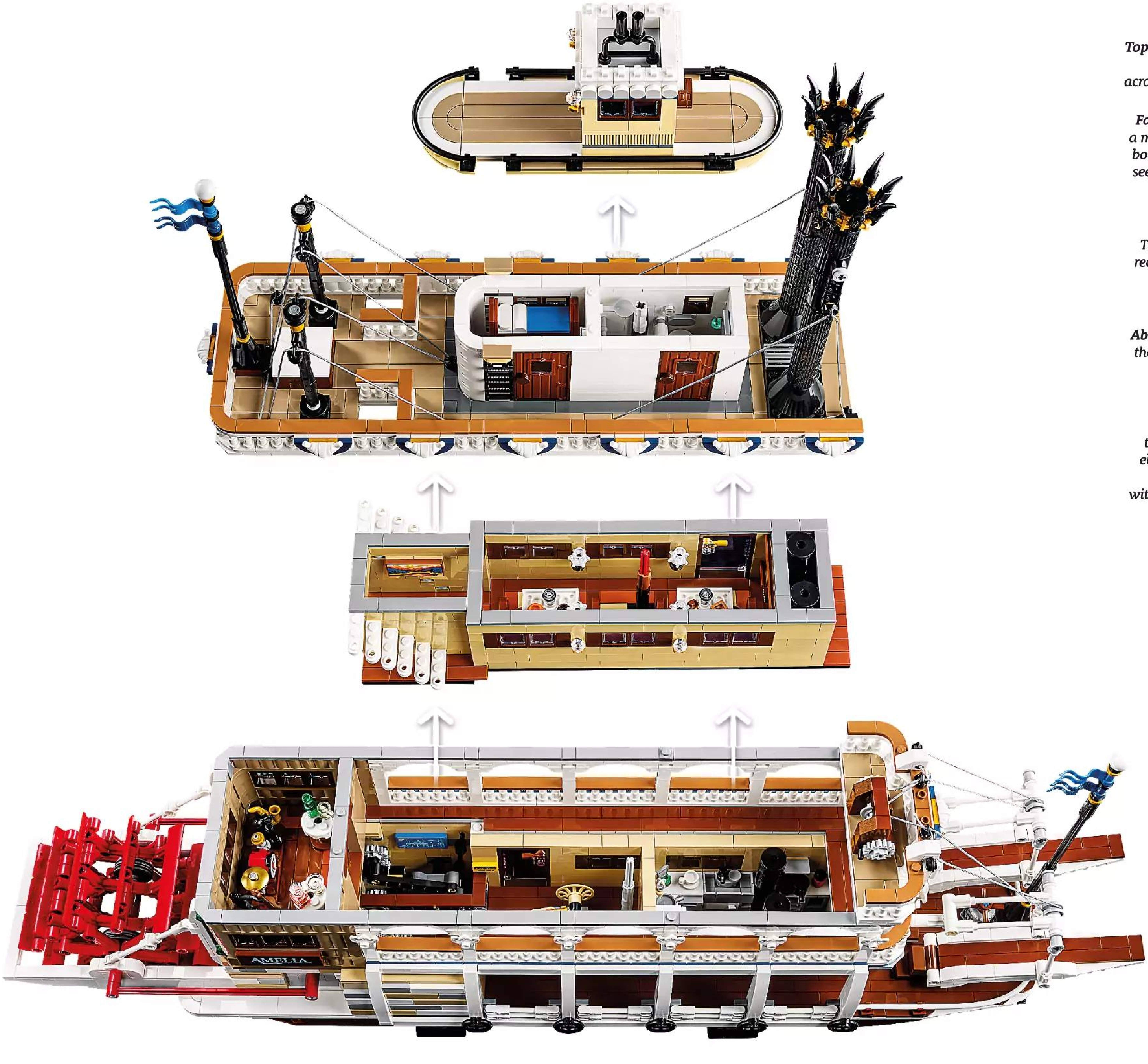
"But in this case, we needed it," Jordan says. "We're not using any other new elements on this one. Everything else is existing, just a few colour changes, so we decided to invest in this one, because it adds a huge amount of functionality to the model. Plus, it could be a useful piece going forward because it's a Technic connector. Other people will use it eventually."

The choice to pursue the new element proved to be the right call, as it allowed Marina to solve the problem of connecting the wheel to the rudder. The result is a fully functional steering system that cuts through the boat's interior while still allowing each floor to be removed without any hassle. The steering and paddle are impressive feats of LEGO System engineering.



CRUISING IN STYLE

Steamboats were used for both cargo and passengers, but 21356 focuses on the passenger experience for its interior details. It incorporates three full decks — the boiler deck on the bottom, the main deck in the middle, and the texas deck up top. Each fills a specific duty in bringing the River Steamboat to life, with the base dedicated to a fascinating museum, the middle providing a luxurious cruise to guests and the top providing an area for the crew.



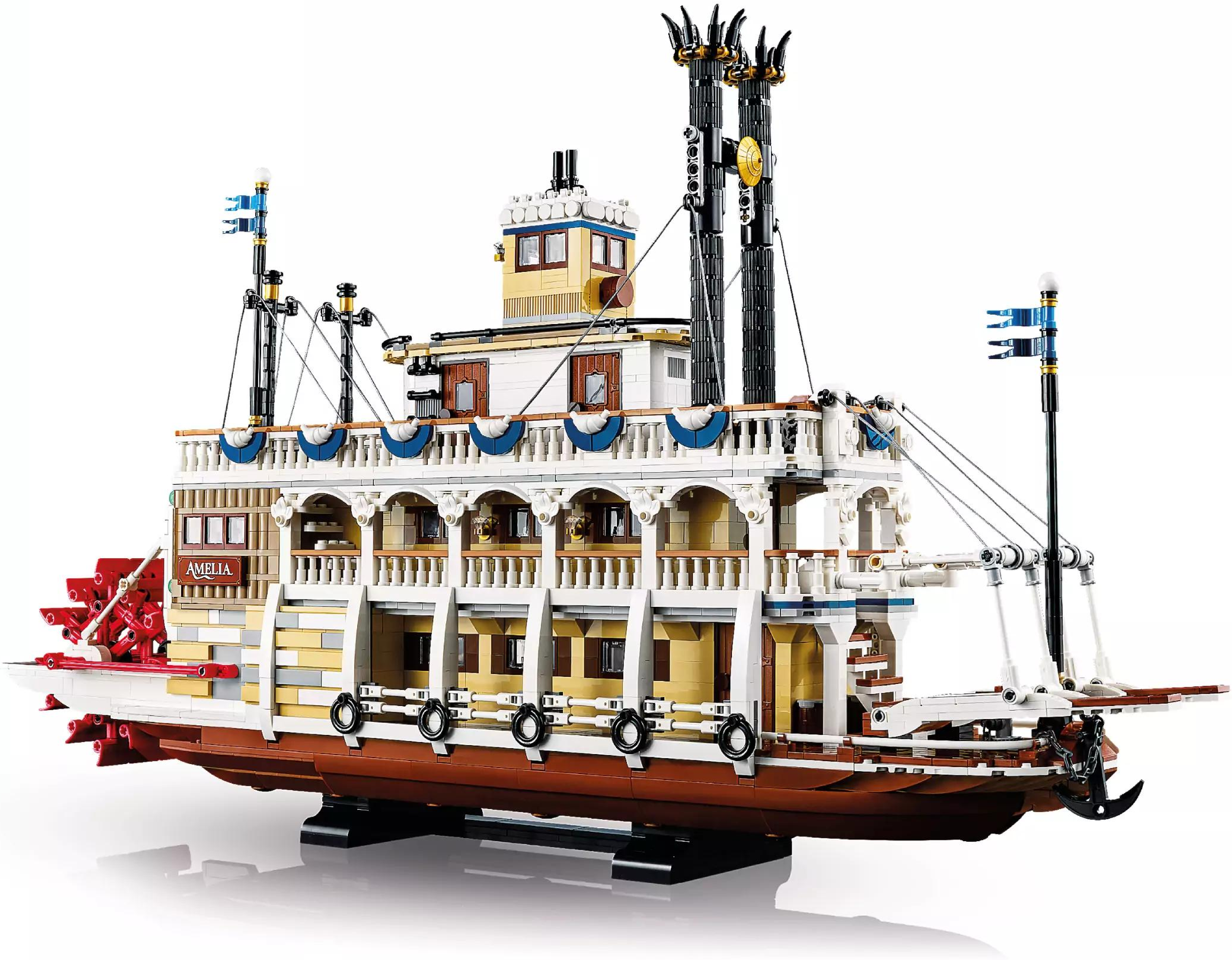
Top left: *Marina used different textures across the steamboat.*

Far left, top: *There's a museum inside the boat, where you can see the vessel's inner workings.*

Far left, bottom: *The set includes six recoloured elements and one new element.*

Above: *As you move the model along the table, the paddle wheel turns.*

Left: *Thanks to the new connector element, each floor can be removed without affecting the functionality.*



TICKET
0937
0937
AMELI

"Here we have the texas deck," Marina says, pointing to the top of the ship. "Usually the upper deck in steamboats was called the texas deck because they were naming decks with American English. Texas was the biggest state, this was the biggest deck, so they called it the texas deck."

21356's texas deck comes with a fully stocked crew cabin, with bunkbeds and a full bathroom. The rooms are sort of built to minifigure scale, though it would be a tight squeeze fitting any minifigures in the space. The beds would be an especially tricky fit, being only two studs wide. But having the detail is certainly better than a hollow interior.

The top deck's other attraction are the riggings attached to the light posts and smokestacks. Besides being a nice detail, they're also another impressive feat of design work. What looks like many strings atop the ship is actually one single string wrapped around the entire deck.

"You start from one side," Marina demonstrates, "then attach it here, then you go through all those loops and holes."

"Obviously it can be complicated with strings," Jordan adds. "We wanted to try and avoid having to tie it because that then restricts the length, because if you have it too tight then it might pull things down." Instead, a specific element keeps the excess string out of sight.

Heading down a level, passengers will be greeted by the main deck, which is designed to provide the fanciest cruising experience possible. About half the space is dedicated to a dining area, which fits two large tables, each with a pair of chairs. Clever building techniques and tables might not be two things often associated with one another, but the luxury dining room aboard the River Steamboat is determined to make a splash. The tabletops are inverted 4x4 plates, which allow for clever studs-not-on-top constructions for pastries and the décor.

"The peony element is like a fancy cake, because dessert is served," Marina smiles. "And then the other flowers, like the tulips, are just flowers."

Moving out of the dining room brings guests through a small hallway with framed pictures hanging on the wall to bring a splash of colour to the otherwise wooden hall. "On this side, we have a picture of the Rocky Mountains. Which is actually an easter egg for the fan designer, Aaron. It's one of his wife's favourite places to go," says Marina. "Then on the other side, we have the restaurant menu and a poster advertising the music stage. The poster says, 'Breckin Band' because Breckin is Aaron's son and the date is his wedding anniversary."

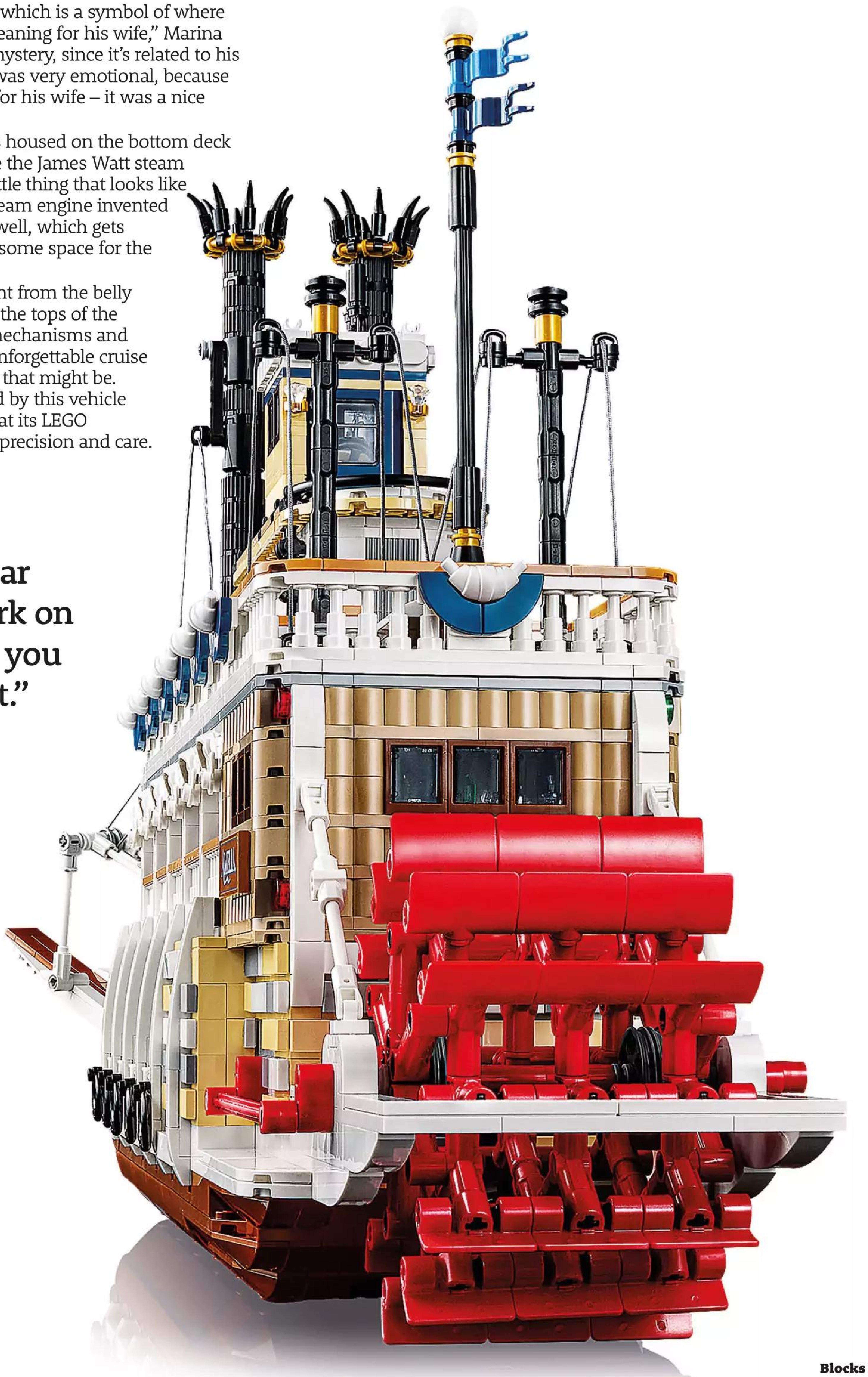
The band will be playing on the stage at the end of the main deck, which has a whole host of instruments, including a drum set, saxophone, bass and microphone. A metallic gold dish makes for a shining cymbal, and the drum features a specially designed image. An image that the designers used as another opportunity to sneak in a reference for the fan designer.

"We have a red cardinal on the drum, which is a symbol of where Aaron is from. And it also has special meaning for his wife," Marina notes. "We thought of including it as a mystery, since it's related to his birthplace. Then when we saw him, he was very emotional, because he told us that it has a special meaning for his wife – it was a nice coincidence."

Marina's favourite area of the model is housed on the bottom deck — the steam engine museum. "We have the James Watt steam engine here," she says. "Then this tiny little thing that looks like a barbecue, but it isn't. This is the first steam engine invented by the Greeks. And there's the boiler, as well, which gets built inside the hull. That way we saved some space for the interior, but you see it as you build."

The careful attention to detail is evident from the belly of the River Steamboat all the way up to the tops of the smokestacks. With its expertly-crafted mechanisms and elegant details, it's sure to make for an unforgettable cruise down the river — wherever in the world that might be. Given that river travel was revolutionised by this vehicle hundreds of years ago, it's only fitting that its LEGO recreation has been delivered with such precision and care.

> "It's all a circular process... you work on something, then you come back to it."



Top left: *There's a display stand to build and place the boat on.*

Top right: *Croissants are one of the model's examples of nice part usage.*

Left: *LEGO Stores and LEGO.com offered 5009157 Amelia Ticket Booth as a gift with purchase bonus set when 21356 launched.*

Right: *Technic elements are essential to the moving paddle wheel.*

WANT FREE LEGO?

FREE TO ENTER GIVEAWAY
EVERY SINGLE DRAW DAY

WAFFLE
COMPETITIONS

JOIN THE UK'S LEADING DEDICATED LEGO COMPETITION COMMUNITY.

WAFFLE
COMPETITIONS

I'M AARON. I FOUNDED WAFFLE COMPETITIONS IN JANUARY 2023. I WANTED TO BUILD A COMMUNITY WHERE OUR PLAYERS HAVE A REAL CHANCE TO WIN THEIR DREAM LEGO SETS FOR A REASONABLE PRICE. WE BELIEVE IN PROVIDING UNMATCHED ODDS WHILE CATERING TO SOME OF THE MOST NICHE LEGO THEMES. WE MAKE SURE THAT OUR SETS ARE COLLECTORS' GRADE SO THAT WE NEVER DISAPPOINT.

CAN'T FIND YOUR HOLY GRAIL SET? LET US DO THE HARD WORK FOR YOU. WITH OVER 2,000 SETS IN OUR INVENTORY, WE WILL HAVE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

WE HOST OVER 20 COMPETITIONS AND 4 FREE GIVEAWAYS EACH WEEK ALL WITH FANTASTIC ODDS. WITH WAFFLE COMPETITIONS IT'S WHEN YOU WIN NOT IF. ARE YOU GOING TO JOIN OUR LIST OF OVER 2500 WINNERS?

PLAY TODAY WITH 20% OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER WITH CODE 'BLOCKS20'

WWW.WAFFLECOMPETITIONS.CO.UK

Trustpilot ★★★★★

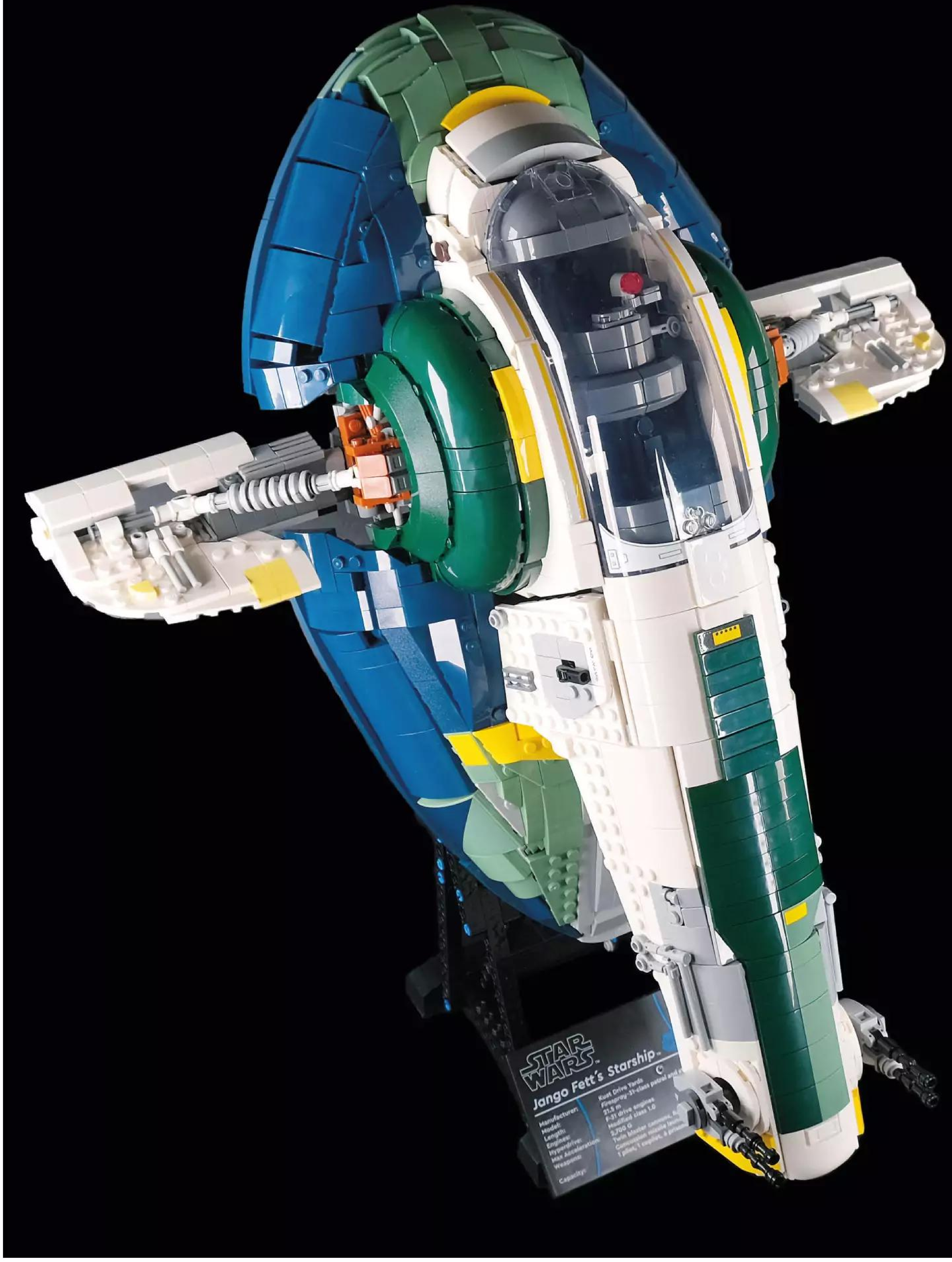
Find us on Facebook

75409

Theme: *Star Wars / **Price:** £259.99, $299.99, €299.99 / **Recommended age:** 18+ / **Pieces:** 2,970 / **Minifigures:** 2*

Jango Fett's Starship

When you need to pursue a Jedi Knight through the asteroids around Geonosis, there's only one ship for the job – and 23 years after it debuted on screen, the UCS version of Jango's ship has arrived



GET THIS IF YOU LIKED

7153 Jango Fett's Slave I

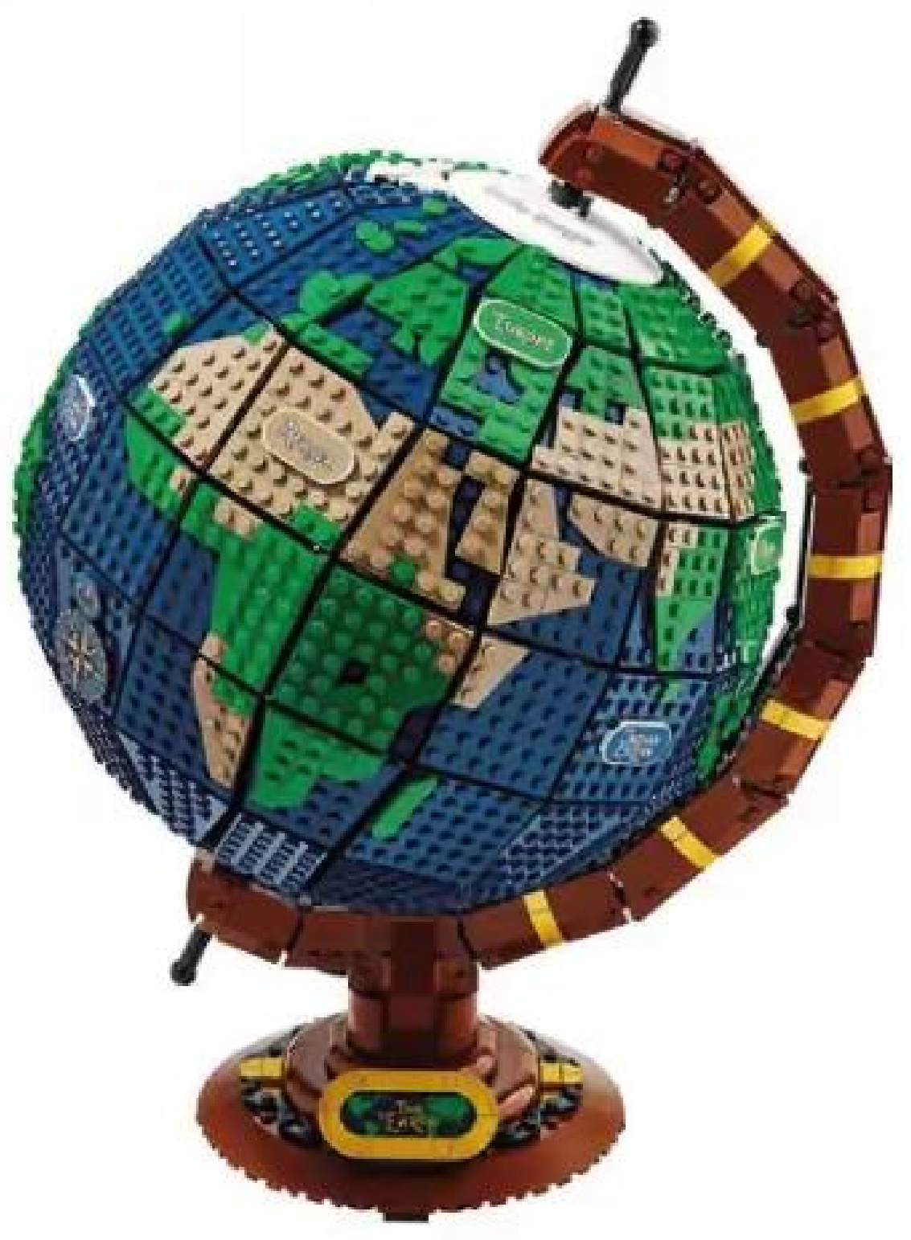
Given the LEGO Group's proclivity for revisiting Star Wars vehicles, it's incredible that there has not been a minifigure version of Jango's starship since Attack of the Clones was in cinemas. If you have been waiting for 23 years, you owe it to yourself to build the modern version.

75397 Jabba's Sail Barge

Putting together the mighty Hutt's pleasure cruiser as a UCS set is a real treat and when it's complete it has a commanding shelf presence. 75409 Jango Fett's Starship would make a great companion piece alongside it, for a scum and villainy inspired display.

21332 The Globe

Some objects just shouldn't work in LEGO bricks. The Globe is a great example of a set that theoretically isn't possible with the LEGO System... yet it is. 75409 is similar in how impressively it captures the shape of the screen starfighter, with its curved and contrasting form.



Star Wars doesn't exactly make things easy for the LEGO design team. Whether it's AT-AT walkers standing on four spindly legs or the unusual form of the Millennium Falcon, vehicles in a galaxy far, far away rarely lend themselves to the uniform shapes of the LEGO System. That's especially true with Jango Fett's starship, originally designed as Boba Fett's starship for Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, with its curved shape and protruding front section.

It's a long-awaited ship, as it hasn't been offered in this colour scheme at minifigure scale since 2002 and has never been offered as part of the Ultimate Collector Series (UCS). 75060 Slave I delivered Boba's version at this scale a decade ago, so there is a lot of scope for this version to improve on what came before.

You begin the build by constructing a large frame using a variety of System and Technic elements. This gradually builds up around the edges, where large sloped pieces create the base shape of the oval. You then layer up slopes and wedges at the lower end in order to sculpt the ship's very specific form.

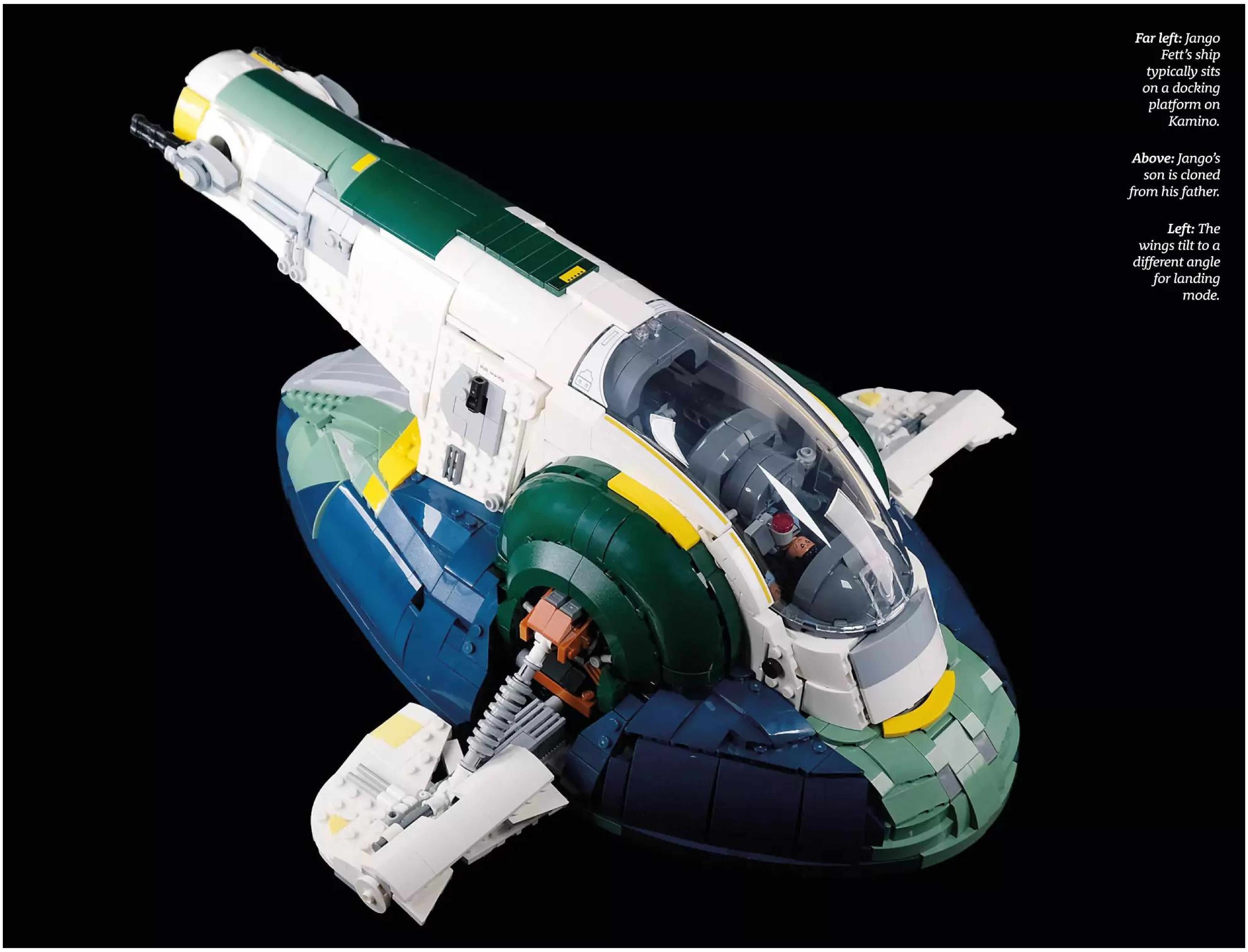
At this stage, you find yourself placing many elements with very little idea as to why in a way that looks haphazard; the designers have clearly been careful to use a variety of pieces in different colours so that it's obvious what goes where – otherwise this part of the build could get very confusing. Later, when you add more pieces, the different colours and element types will make it clear where they ought to go.

Unsurprisingly, the protruding front section needs to be built as a separate construct. You put together a very specifically shaped frame and tile up the tall front section in green, then slot the back of it into the main oval section of the set. Once it is pinned in place using Technic pieces, it's impressively solid.

When you reach this point in the process, you are building subsections that then attach to the main model, sometimes adding a few bricks in between. There are interior parts of the model to construct, such as the dual level cockpit, and exterior sections, such as the panels that run down the sides of the protruding front.

Considering how messy the basic frame of the vehicle was towards the beginning of the build, it's very rewarding when you add the final touches to the back and find that the set looks almost as good from that view as it does from the front.

When it is time to attach the wings, you can enjoy the Technic function embedded inside the ship that allows them to move in unison as you shift the ship from landing mode to flight mode. The designers deserve credit for the level of detail where the wings connect to the main



Far left: *Jango Fett's ship typically sits on a docking platform on Kamino.*

Above: *Jango's son is cloned from his father.*

Left: *The wings tilt to a different angle for landing mode.*

Right: *Curved elements run around the ship's edges.*

Below: *Jango removes his helmet when piloting the ship.*

Below right: *Jango can enter the ship as he does on screen.*

Far right: *There's a sonic charge in the back.*

Bottom right: *The cockpit area is removable.*

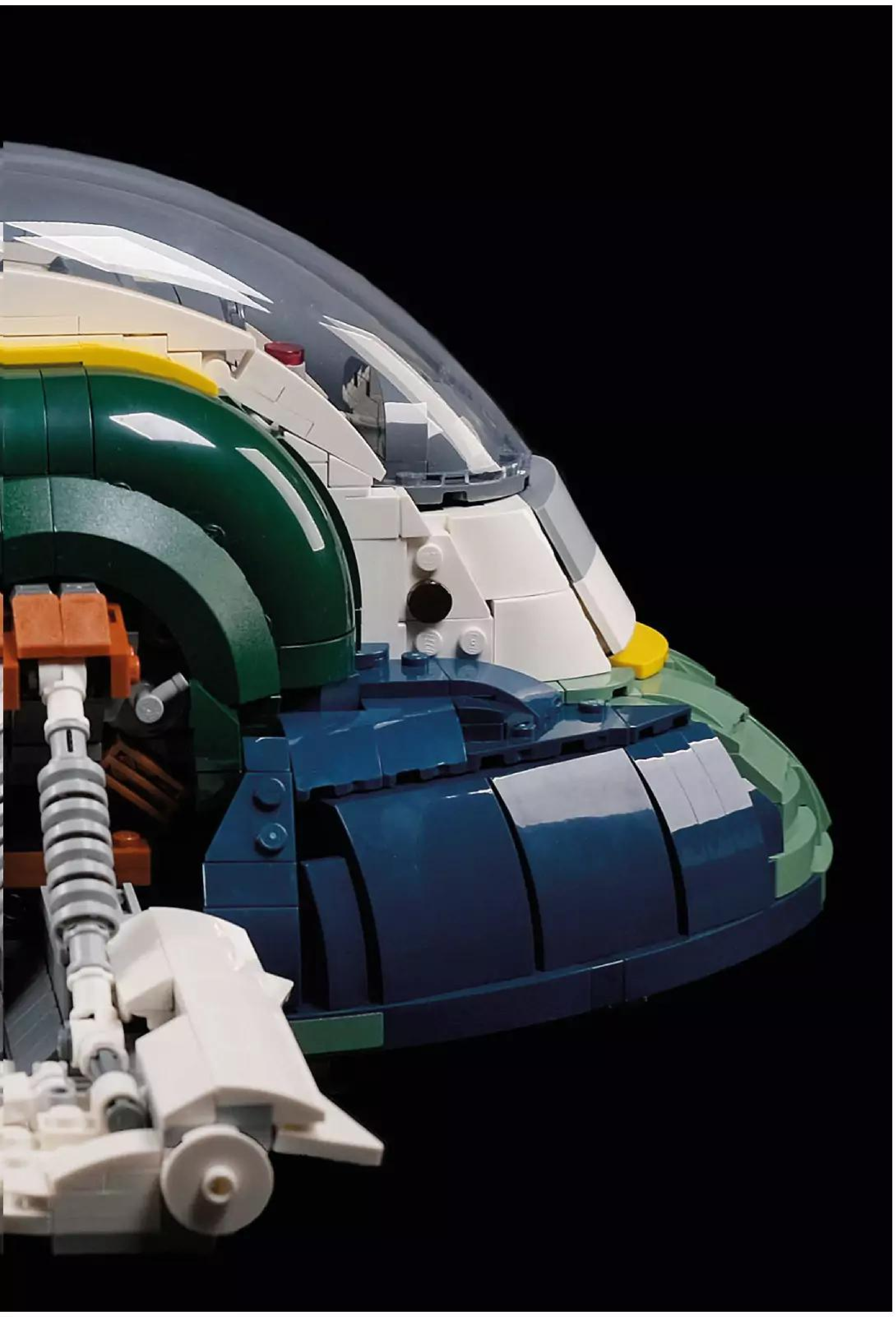
body – it's not particularly visible, yet they have taken the time to closely follow how the vehicle appears on screen.

Every trick in the repertoire is used to execute the angles required to replicate the Firespray. Sections are attached at appropriate angles using clips; Technic beams allow sections to be attached at specific gradients; bars slot into specialised plates to achieve layering; by the end of the build, you will have learned or been reminded of the myriad ways that modern elements allow you to achieve shapes that seem impossible.

Fans will remember Jango Fett walking up the ship's ramp and bumping his head in the film, so the set allows you to press down on the ramp to open it up, then utilises a clever swinging Technic construction so that you can close it again by pushing the door. It's always nice when a display-first model includes a neat little feature like this.

It's handy that you can slide out the cockpit section, which has space for three minifigures (it's a shame Zam Wesell isn't included to sit alongside Jango and son). Not only does this allow you to better admire the detail in this area, but it makes placing the characters easy. There's a hidden compartment behind this section where you find a jar of bacta (a nod to Star Wars: Bounty Hunter?) and space for Jango's gear.

The ship most significantly improves on 75060 Slave I in the shaping



of the curved body, which takes advantage of a decade's worth of new elements and the more sophisticated ways of connecting them.

It is a little nerve wracking when you go to mount the model on the display stand and there are only two anchor points, but the base is built in an extremely efficient and effective way that allows the ship to balance securely.

Jango Fett has always been served well by his minifigures and this one upgrades the character to modern standards. Arm printing adds some of the equipment he keeps on his wrists and foot printing completes the look of his legs. It's a great interpretation of the fairly unfussy armour that the character wears in Attack of the Clones.

In the film, Boba Fett wears a simple outfit and the minifigure captures it – this isn't the most exciting Star Wars character to be translated into LEGO form. It's a decent minifigure, aside from the hair – the previous wig element better reflected how the character looks on screen.

This is a remarkably accurate recreation of the ship as it appears in Star Wars: Attack of the Clones. The finished display model is absolutely beautiful, with very little compromise indicating that it's a LEGO set. The build to get there is fascinating, with elements coming together in surprising, intriguing and genuinely impressive ways so that you are delighted throughout the process. That it is replicated at the correct scale for minifigures just caps everything off beautifully – this is a successful and essential addition to the Ultimate Collector Series.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
89
This sophisticated build leads to an impressive, polished end product. It is fantastic to see another vehicle from the prequels join the Ultimate Collector Series.

75411

Theme: *Star Wars* / ***Price:*** *£12.99, $17.99, €14.99* /
Recommended age: *6+* / ***Pieces:*** *143* / ***Minifigures:*** *1*

Darth Maul Mech

With his fancy lightsaber moves and gymnastic ability, let alone his mastery of the Force, it's hard to imagine Darth Maul needing a mech. This is a LEGO theme though and children need pocket money priced toys… so Maul gets a mech.

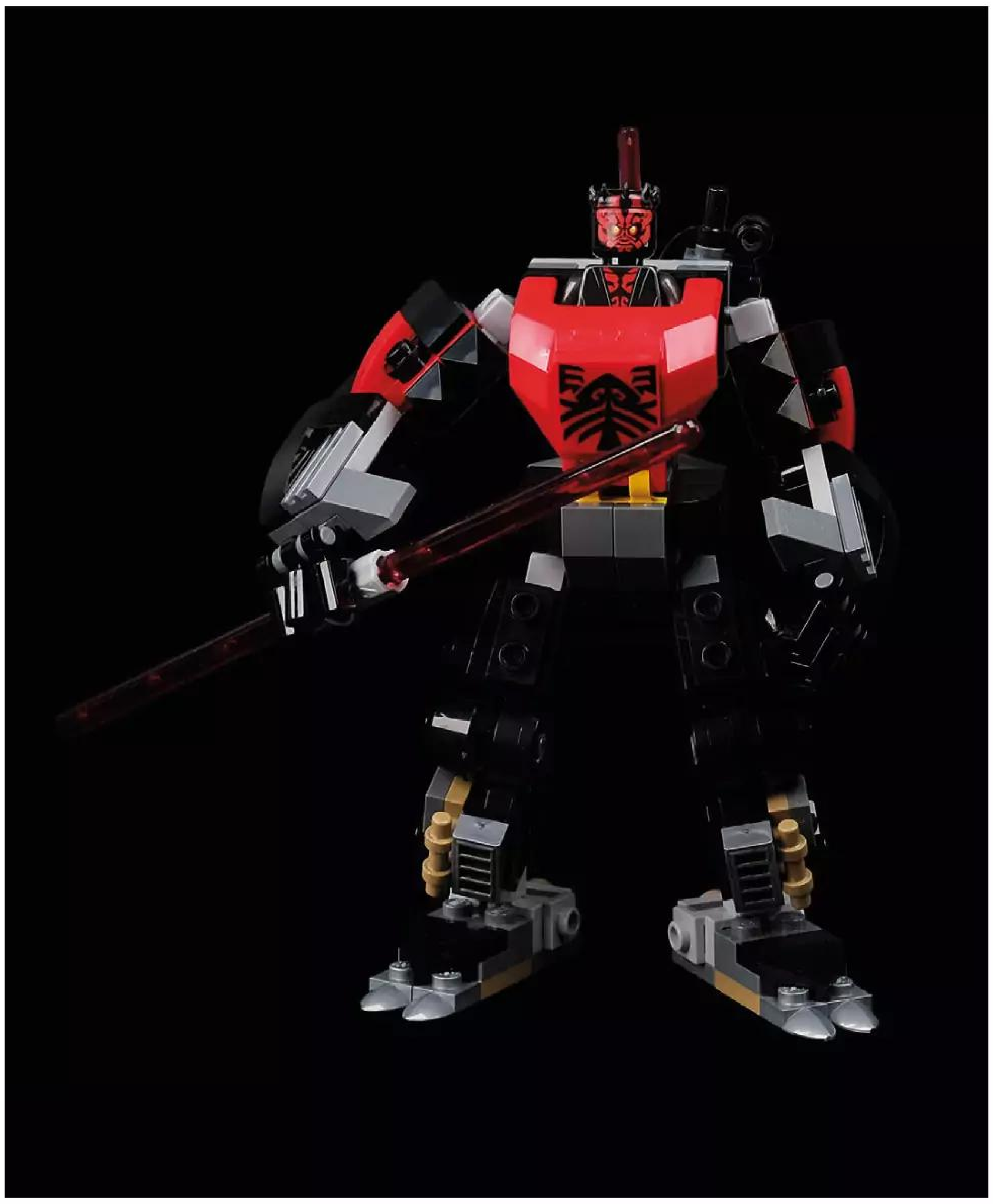
It's a timely release with the announcement of Darth Maul: Shadow Lord and the minifigure in the set is inspired by the character's The Clone Wars era appearances. It's very similar to the version from 75310 Duel on Mandalore – only the eyes have been updated, to reflect the new style that is now used for Sith characters.

As for the mech, it follows the same template as previous builds in both Star Wars and other themes. Chunky limb elements are decorated with character-specific elements to convey the dark sider's vibe through a machine. Because it is inspired by Darth Maul post-accident, there are silver accents to the black legs, implying the mechanical legs the character walks on. A nice decorated tile piece features his body tattoos – and that's the element that really tells you this is Maul's mech.

Given the price, it's a set fans can pick up without feeling guilty – but given that the Maul figure is barely changed and that mechs make no sense in Star Wars, there are plenty of better options to choose from.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

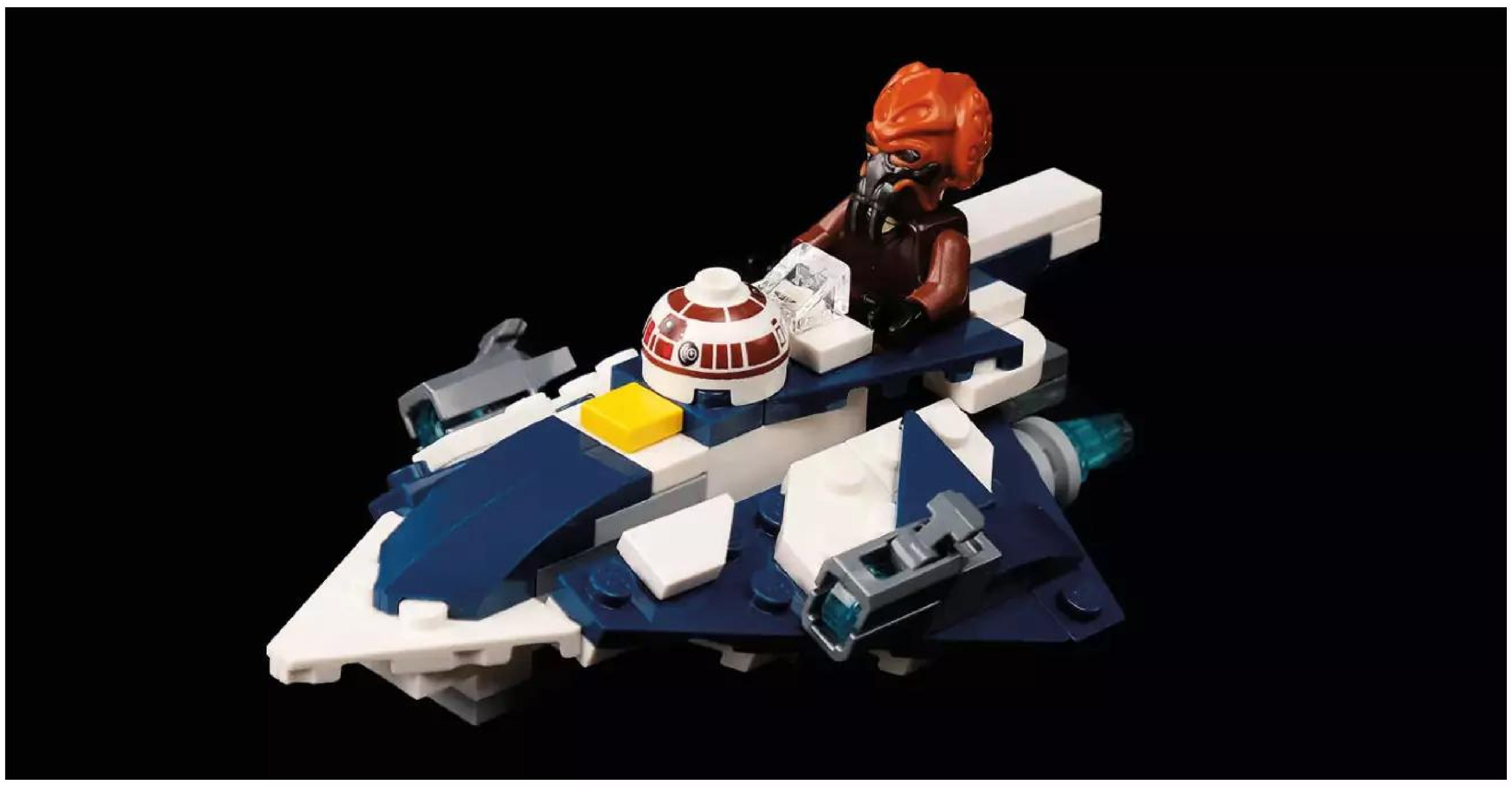
Verdict
40
The build is straightforward and familiar, the play opportunities are there but limited, it isn't a great set for display – the Maul minifigure is still solid though.



75400

Theme: *Star Wars* / ***Price:*** *£12.99, $14.99, €14.99* /
Recommended age: *6+* / ***Pieces:*** *89* / ***Minifigures:*** *1*

Plo Koon's Jedi Starfighter Microfighter



It feels as if Microfighters have been around forever… and not just because collectors have shelves full of them. The series is mining some quite obscure vehicles from the saga for inspiration, such as Plo Koon's Jedi Starfighter, which is seen in Star Wars: The Clone Wars (there are vehicles that had much more screen time in the show that have not made it to Microfighters yet).

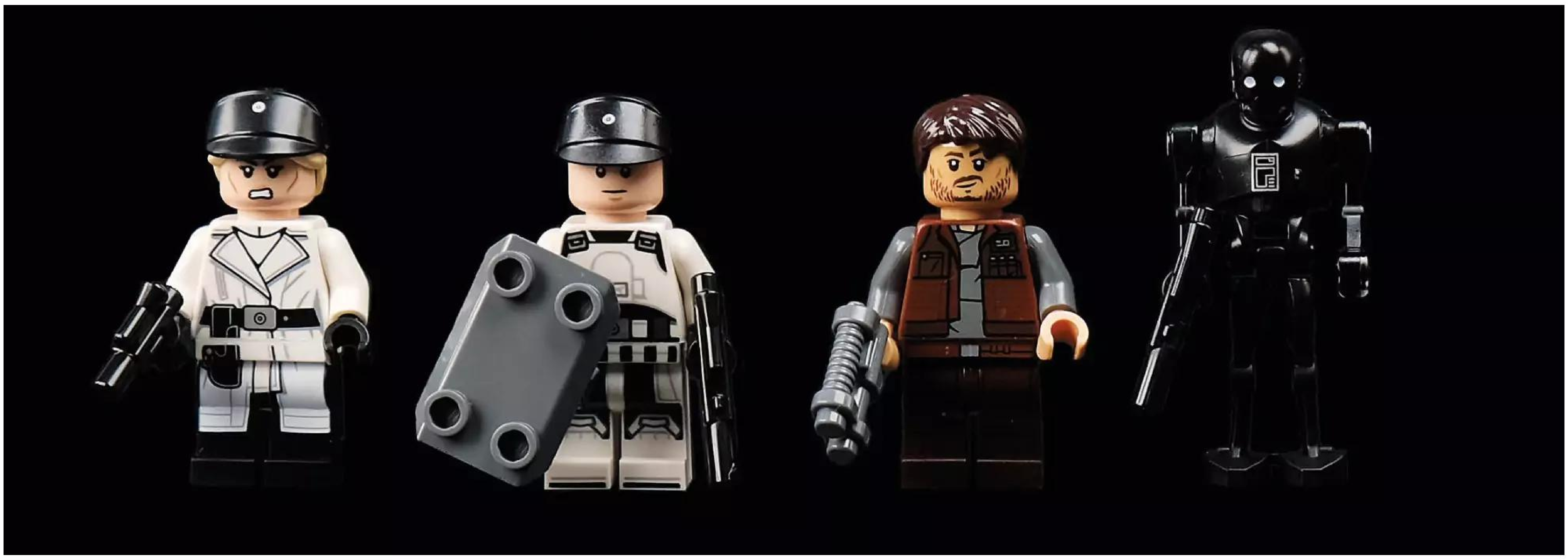
Curved wedge plates at the front do a great job of delivering the Delta-7B's shape, while the blue and white throughout the model gives a good sense of the actual colour scheme. With strange proportions and an open cockpit, a Microfighter is not about accurately representing the screen vehicle, but caricaturing it in a pleasing way. In that regard, this set is very successful.

The last version of Plo Koon was introduced in 2014 and this is a definite improvement. The printing conveys his simple robes well, but it's the new head that truly impresses. It captures the shape better and looks much less sinister than the previous version.

Compared to 75411 Darth Maul Mech, the price seems a bit high… but this is a genuinely new minifigure and a starship is actually relevant to Star Wars, so for most long-term collectors, this is the better option of the two.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

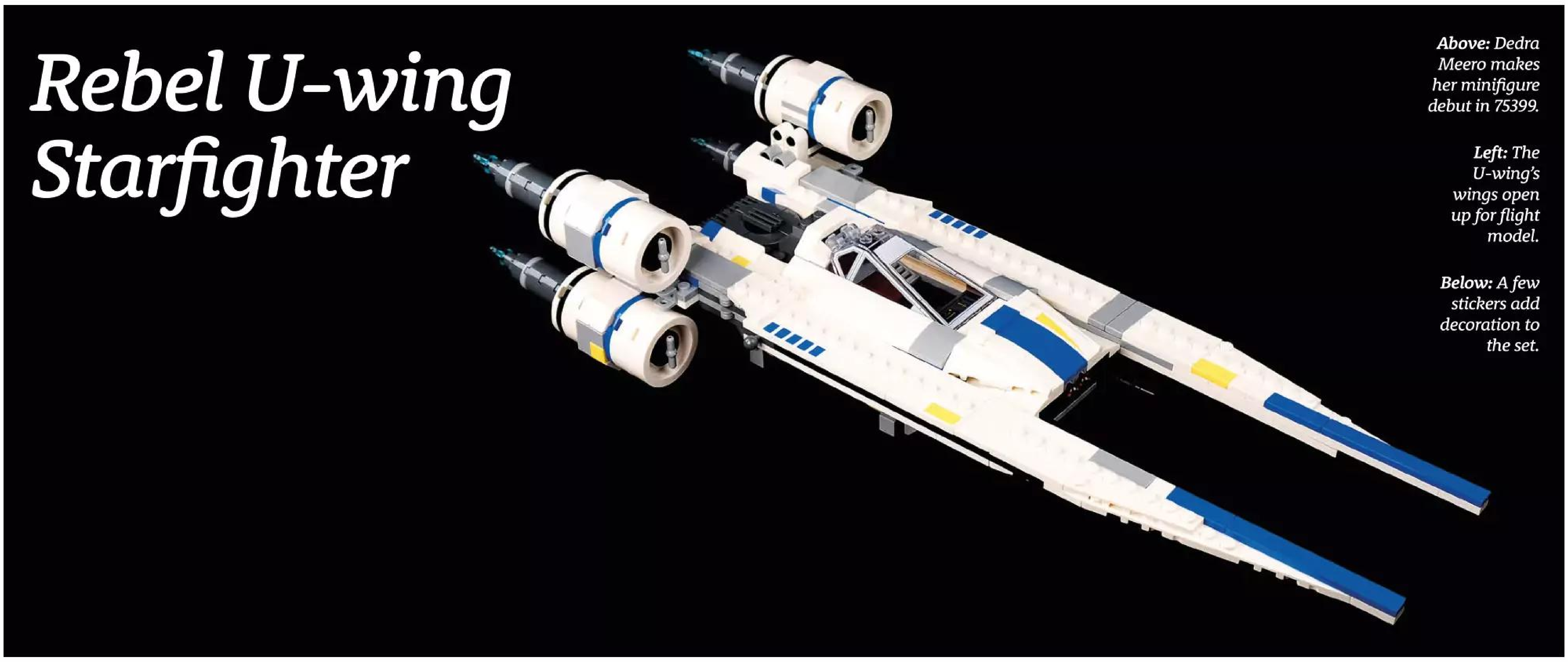
Verdict
59
Microfighters are still fun, even if they're not as novel as they once were. The new Plo Koon minifigure is well worth adding to the collection.



75399

Theme: *Star Wars* / ***Price:*** *£59.99, $69.99, €69.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *594* / ***Minifigures:*** *4*

Rebel U-wing Starfighter



Above: *Dedra Meero makes her minifigure debut in 75399.*

Left: *The U-wing's wings open up for flight model.*

Below: *A few stickers add decoration to the set.*

Just ahead of Star Wars: Andor returning to screens, the LEGO Group launched a new set inspired by the series. Given its focus on the human drama and locations over vehicles, it makes sense that the streaming series has not inspired many LEGO models. 75399 Rebel U-wing Starfighter revisits a ship that was last delivered at minifigure scale in 2016 alongside the release of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.

This version of the ship is smaller than that previous edition – both in terms of piece count and size. Generally, this actually works in the model's favour; 75155 Rebel U-wing Fighter had significant issues when it came to the vessel's proportions. By shrinking it down further, the design team have been able to deliver the elongated wings better and have the troop carrier section scaled better with the cockpit.

It is an incredibly pacey build that starts with the central core, before moving to each of the wings and then the engines. If you have built previous Star Wars starships, you'll have a good idea of how this will go – there are no groundbreaking 'aha' moments, but it's still fun to put together. The way that the wings clip into place in the U-wing's two different modes is very effective.

The cockpit is not entirely accurate as the set uses the standard Star Wars canopy, but it's close enough to be acceptable. There's space inside for Andor to lie down – this is perhaps where this size would have been better suited to the Starship Collection, as the compatibility with the minifigures is really limited because they are so out of scale.

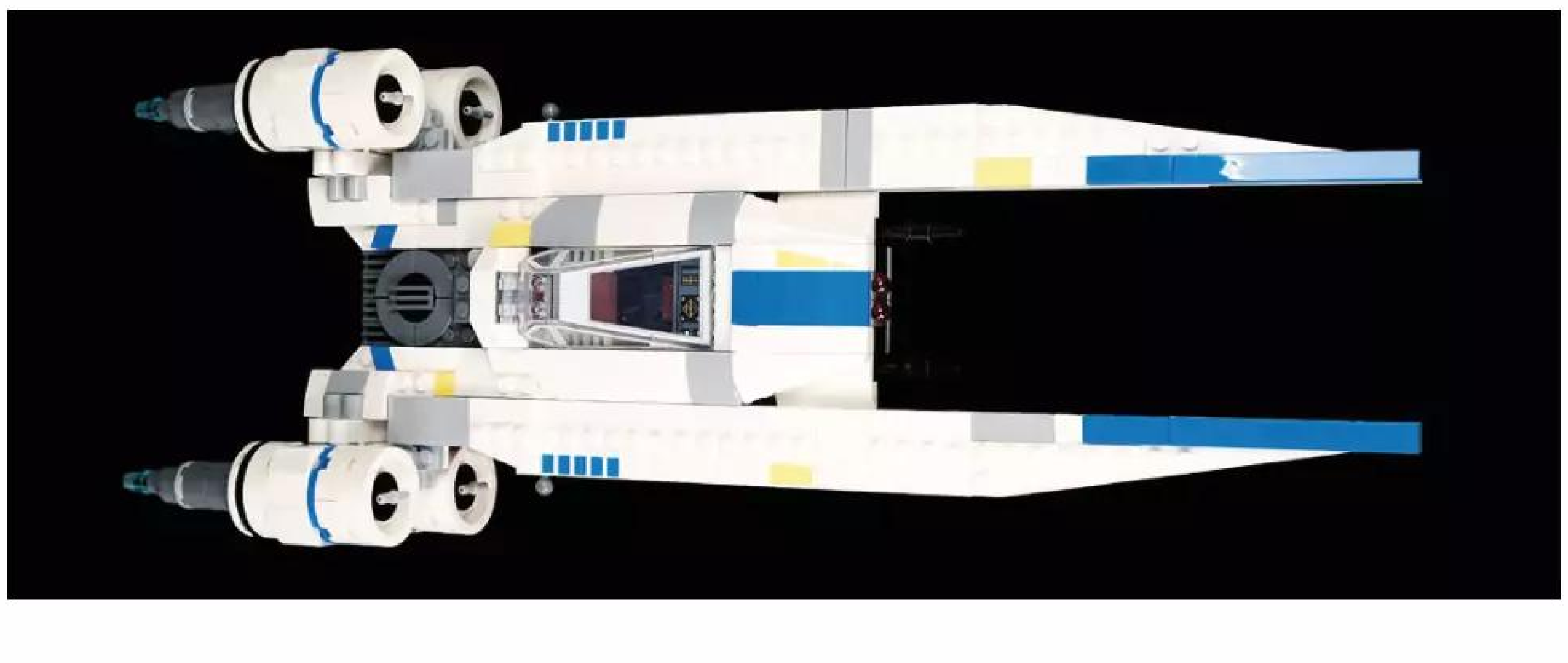
Cassian Andor gets a decent new minifigure and K-2SO is incredibly similar to the 2016 version, so it is the villains who steal the set. The white uniforms of the Imperial Security Bureau have not really been delivered in LEGO Star Wars yet, so the Tactical Agent is a fun inclusion.

Dedra Meero is even better though – she has one of the best sneers in the galaxy, which is captured on her face print. Her blonde hair is sticking out of her cap, while her uniform looks fantastic, capturing the long trench coat that she wears in the series across the torso and legs.

This is a really nicely executed depiction of the U-wing, carefully scaled through judicious use of elements. While it would be nice to have a massive version that is scaled to minifigures, the smaller size means that this model isn't prohibitively expensive – and is joyously swooshable.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
71
The U-wing is back on screen and back in the brick too. Delivered at a different scale to the previous version, this is an effective rendition of the rebel ship.



72033

Theme: *Super Mario /* ***Price:*** *£29.99, $34.99, €34.99 /*
Recommended age: *8+ /* ***Pieces:*** *387 /* ***Characters:*** *1*

Donkey Kong & DK Jumbo

Left: Donkey Kong features printed elements to convey his face.

Below: There's a target in addition to the vehicle.

Donkey Kong made his much-awaited LEGO debut in 2023, but since then he has been curiously absent from LEGO Super Mario. With the theme's shift to focusing on Mario Kart, Donkey Kong has his own bespoke vehicle tied to the character's jungle themed aesthetic.

The build starts with the big man himself. Aside from a small change on the back, this Donkey Kong figure is the same as his first (and only) appearance in 71424 Donkey Kong's Tree House. Still, the figure is exemplary, using SNOT techniques to create Kong's muscular physique.

It would be nice if the next iteration of the character has a bit more articulation. This version only hinges at the feet so he looks a little gawky when standing up straight. An elbow joint wouldn't go amiss either. Within the confines of size though, the figure is full of personality.

The DK Jumbo made its first appearance in 2003's Mario Kart: Double Dash (2003) and returned in Mario Kart Tour (2019). Despite its modest history, the kart is the perfect vehicle to represent Donkey Kong.

The kart's barrel design has allowed the designers to create something that is both circular and blocky. The front of the kart is built up using various bricks with side studs that then allow a series of hinged brick-built staves to be set at various angles.

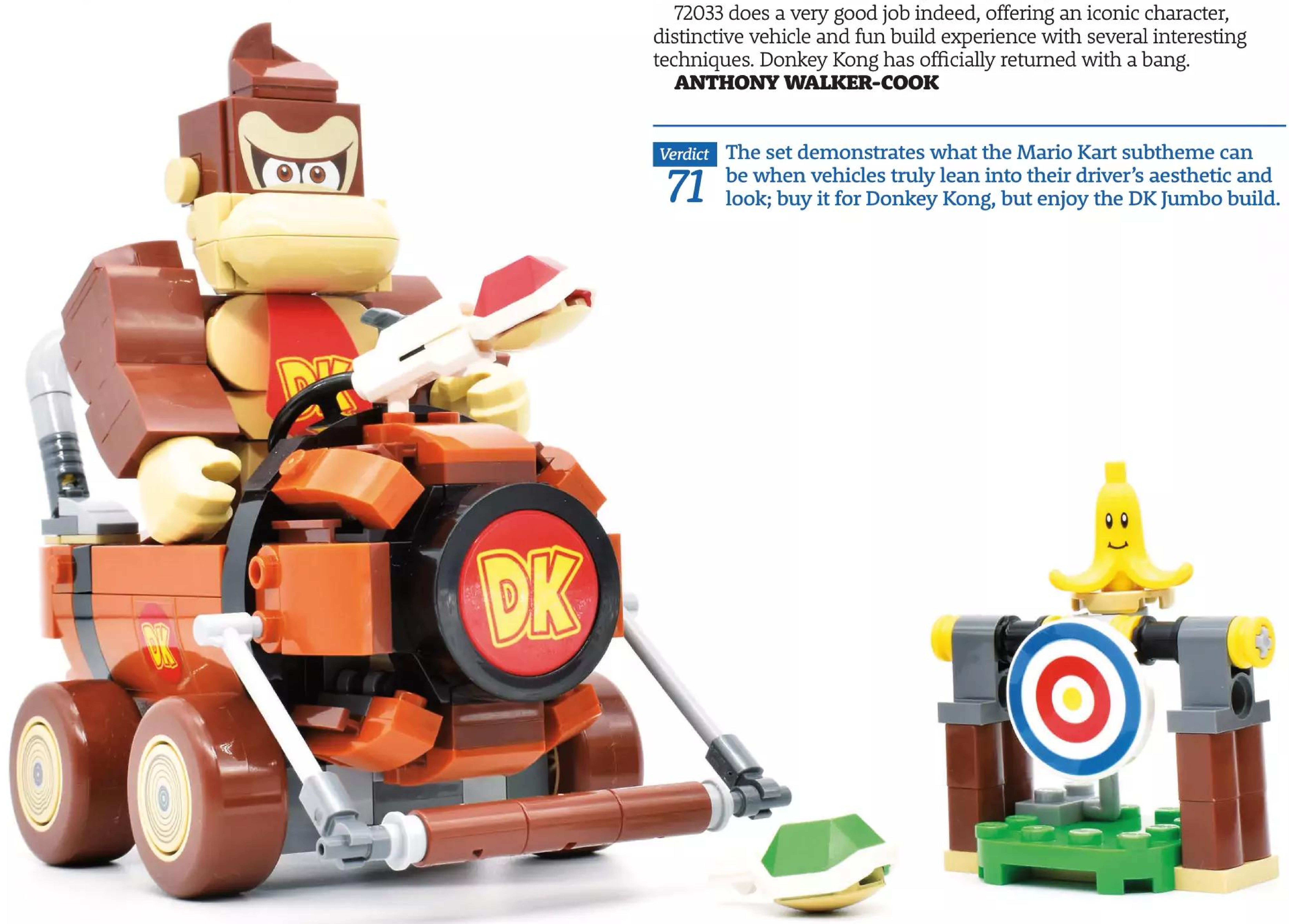
The reddish brown door rail plates add some texture to the front of the build, whilst the DK logo (a sticker) is proudly displayed on the barrel head. A variety of plates all over give a smooth finish, with a series of black pieces that recreate the barrel's hoops to great effect.

The wheels use tan coloured stickers with tree rings to further add a wooden look to the set – it's a simple yet effective touch. The final result is a kart that is very robust, as is befitting of one of the heavier vehicles in the franchise. It has plenty of space for Donkey Kong in the driver's seat and he does look great when in position.

72033 does a very good job indeed, offering an iconic character, distinctive vehicle and fun build experience with several interesting techniques. Donkey Kong has officially returned with a bang.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict **71** **The set demonstrates what the Mario Kart subtheme can be when vehicles truly lean into their driver's aesthetic and look; buy it for Donkey Kong, but enjoy the DK Jumbo build.**



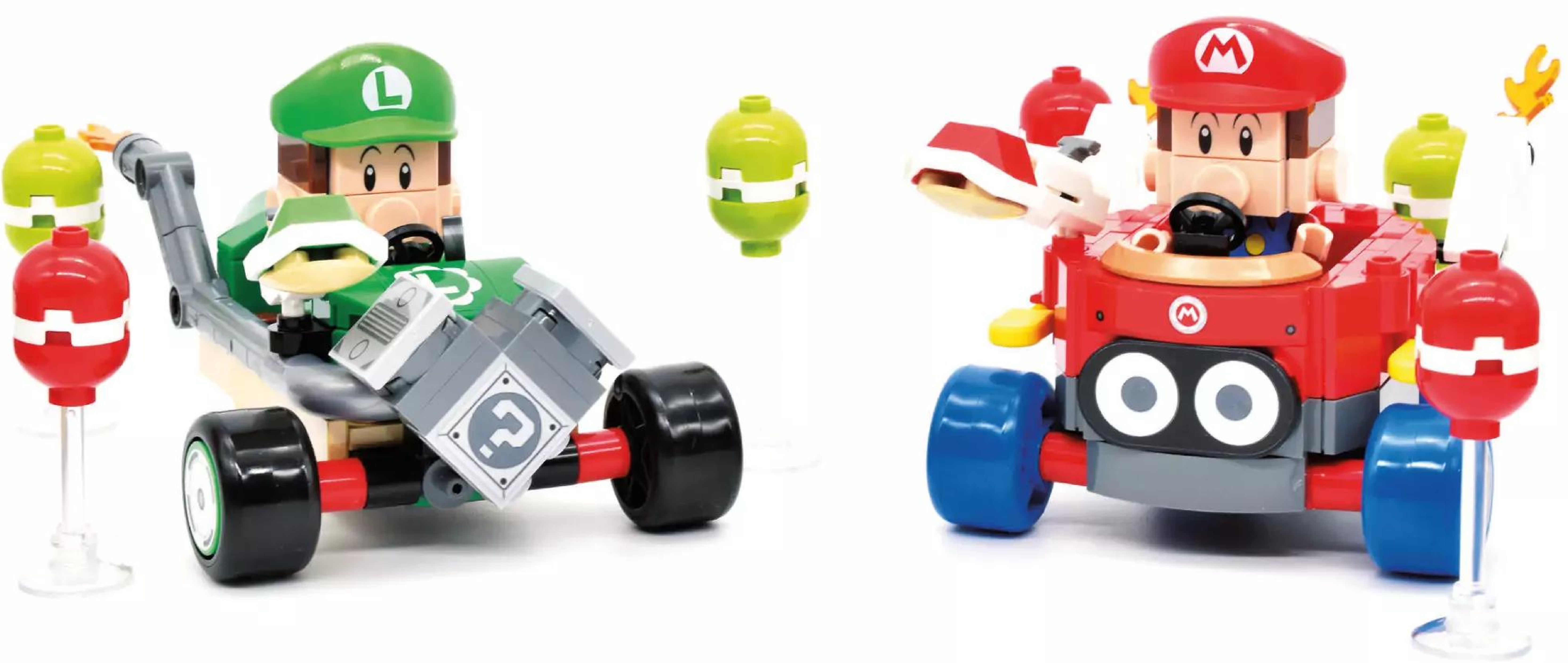
72034

Theme: *Super Mario* / ***Price:*** *£24.99, $29.99, €29.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *321* / ***Characters:*** *2*

Baby Mario vs. Baby Luigi

Left: *Biddybuggy and Tri-speeder are included.*

Below: *Baby Mario and Baby Luigi make their LEGO debut.*



Although LEGO Super Mario has recreated an impressive range of characters since its introduction in 2020, a pair who have been curiously absent are Baby Mario and Baby Luigi. First introduced in Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island (1995), the duo have appeared in a plethora of Nintendo games over the years and make their adorable LEGO debut in 72034 Mario Kart – Baby Mario Vs. Baby Luigi.

The figures themselves are cuteness personified. Both hat pieces have appeared before, but they work especially well on the baby characters as they are almost comically large compared to their bodies. Aside from respective colour differences, the two are built in a process that's not dissimilar to a miniature BrickHeadz figure.

For a duelling set, it's especially welcome that the two characters get distinctively different karts. The shape of Baby Mario's Biddybuggy (which first appeared in 2014's Mario Kart 8) evokes a baby's cot, even if in universe it's more supposed to resemble a Para-Biddybud.

SNOT techniques create a rounded shape, however the vehicle is a bit blockier than is ideal. Two yellow ice lolly pieces give the impression of the wheel guards, but don't quite stretch around the wheel. It's apparent that the vehicle isn't completely accurate to the source material.

Baby Luigi, meanwhile, rides the Tri-speeder, a somewhat unusual choice as there's no apparent link between this vehicle and its driver. Still, whilst there might not be a personal link, it does provide a completely different shape to the Biddybuggy, meaning a fresh build experience. It's a shame the Goo-Goo Buggy wasn't chosen instead, as its unusual shaping would have offered an interesting build and it would have been more appropriate.

Nonetheless, the Tri-speeder's colouring and shaping is largely accurate, with exhaust pipes running down both sides, and despite only having three wheels it is incredibly sturdy (thanks especially to the wide wheels). What's less successful is the front V-twin engine, which isn't robust enough, although it does rattle.

Six buildable balloons are included, encouraging fans to test their shooting skills to see who can knock their opponent's balloons down first, potentially a welcome reference to balloon battle in Mario Kart: Double Dash, where the duo made their Mario Kart debut.

To finally get the baby Mario Bros. in a set with this much play and variety, the pricepoint seems more than fair, even if Mario Kart fans might have a few quibbles with the vehicles.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict 64

Mario and Baby Luigi are fine additions to the Super Mario theme. Even though their karts are not perfect, the set offers decent value for money.

72036

Theme: *Super Mario* / ***Price:*** *£69.99, $79.99, €79.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *823* / ***Characters:*** *4*

Mario Kart – Baby Peach & Grand Prix

Does this racing set have enough to jump start the new subtheme?

72036 Baby Peach and Grand Prix Set offers three vehicles and a host of racing-related paraphernalia to fire the starting pistol on some Mario Kart races.

Baby Peach isn't the only brick-built bairn released this wave, but she's the most detailed. She's incredibly cute, from the stud dummy (the character's trademark) to the crown. Her hair is nicely crafted using yellow cheese slopes and various other angled pieces.

Baby Peach drives the Wild Wiggler; although it was Yoshi's signature vehicle when it first appeared in 2014's Mario Kart 8, the kart fits Baby Peach's sweet look. The vehicle is fairly accurate to the source material – it features the green handlebars, brown seat and purple pedals (that mimic a Wiggler's shoes). The intimation of the Wiggler's three midriff sections is conveyed using circular plates.

The Wild Wiggler is a solid unit; it would be nice if ball joints made the middle section more moveable, but it's a small point. Given how many other sweet characters there are in the theme – Yoshi, Toad, other Baby characters – this is a fine addition that will see plenty of use.

The set also builds the Landship, which is driven by Lemmy the Koopaling. Lemmy appears elsewhere (in 71403 Adventures with Peach), but it has been several years since that model launched so his inclusion here is highly welcome. The character has a great sense of height thanks to his multi-coloured mohawk and his eccentric personality is nicely captured with the wild eyes and wide mouth plate.

The Landship itself is a great build. Despite its chibi style, it's clear that the kart intends to imitate Bowser's Airship. The canons and spiked jibboom add some fun details.

In Mario Kart 8, in which the Landship was introduced, various parts of the kart were coloured to connect to the driver – as such, the canon covers are lime green and the cabin is sky blue here, as they are in the game when Lemmy drives the Landship. The seat, unfortunately, isn't orange.

Toad is the final racer included, with a standard bike, although 'standard' might be an unfair adjective as this bike does not appear elsewhere (72031 Yoshi Biker is particularly stylised to its rider). It's a particularly cool vehicle, with a simple blue-and-white colour scheme and some nice parts usage where the guns double as handlebars.

Various Toad figures have released in this first wave of Mario Kart models and the one in 72036 wears the character's generic clothing. All vehicles are equipped with shell shooters and a banana peel is included too, so various weapons from the Mario Kart games can be put to good use.

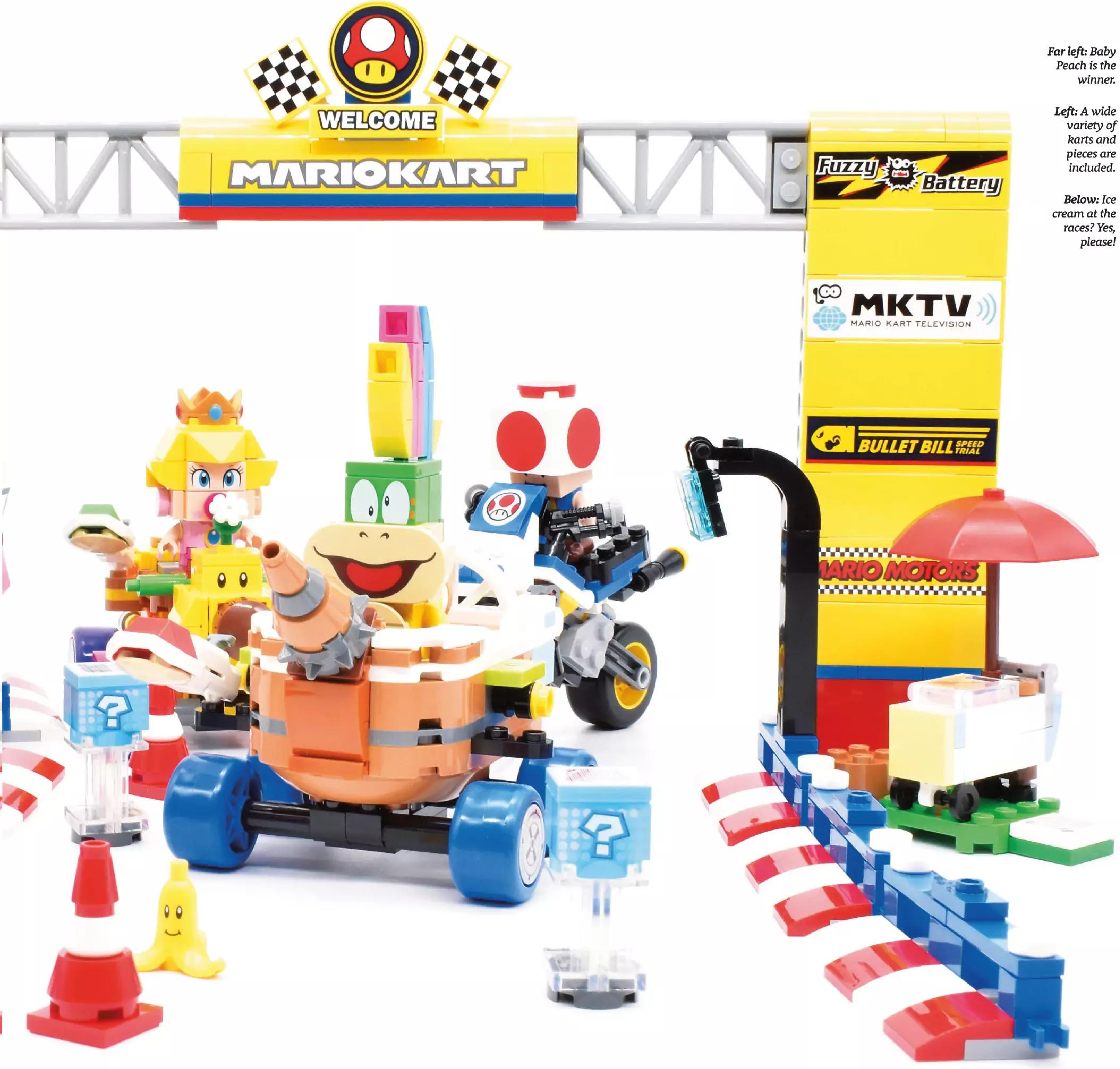
The build starts with these three characters and their vehicles before moving on to a number of race-related paraphernalia, some expected (eight quick but repetitive to build barriers) and some not (the ice cream kart is a nice touch). Direction signs, a winner's podium, traffics cones and two item boxes are included.

There is also a substantial starting gate that is decorated with a variety of stickers that advertise various in-universe businesses, such as Undead Motors, Bullet Bill Speed Trial and Bowser Oil. The Mario Kart logo is in the middle of the gate as part of an attractive stickered mushroom sign – it's somewhat disappointing there's not a brick-built

***Far left:** Baby Peach is the winner.*

***Left:** A wide variety of karts and pieces are included.*

***Below:** Ice cream at the races? Yes, please!*



sign, but the gate is robustly built and wide enough to stage various close finishes.

Finally, it wouldn't be a race without Lakitu signalling when to go. A solid base means Lakitu can float on his cloud above the action. Although the figure is similar to previous appearances, the cloud is a bit smaller. It would have benefitted from being as substantial as the version in 71441 Adventures with Interactive LEGO Peach to do Lakitu justice given his key role in the Mario Kart universe. He is also missing his vital fishing rod, which is used in the games to bring back racers who have fallen off the map; why this rod is missing here is a bit of a quandary given how familiar it is.

72036 offers the complete racing experience at a fair price. Of course, there's not a full track, so it's more about creating the impression of a race, whether that be an adrenaline-filled start or a nail-biting finish.

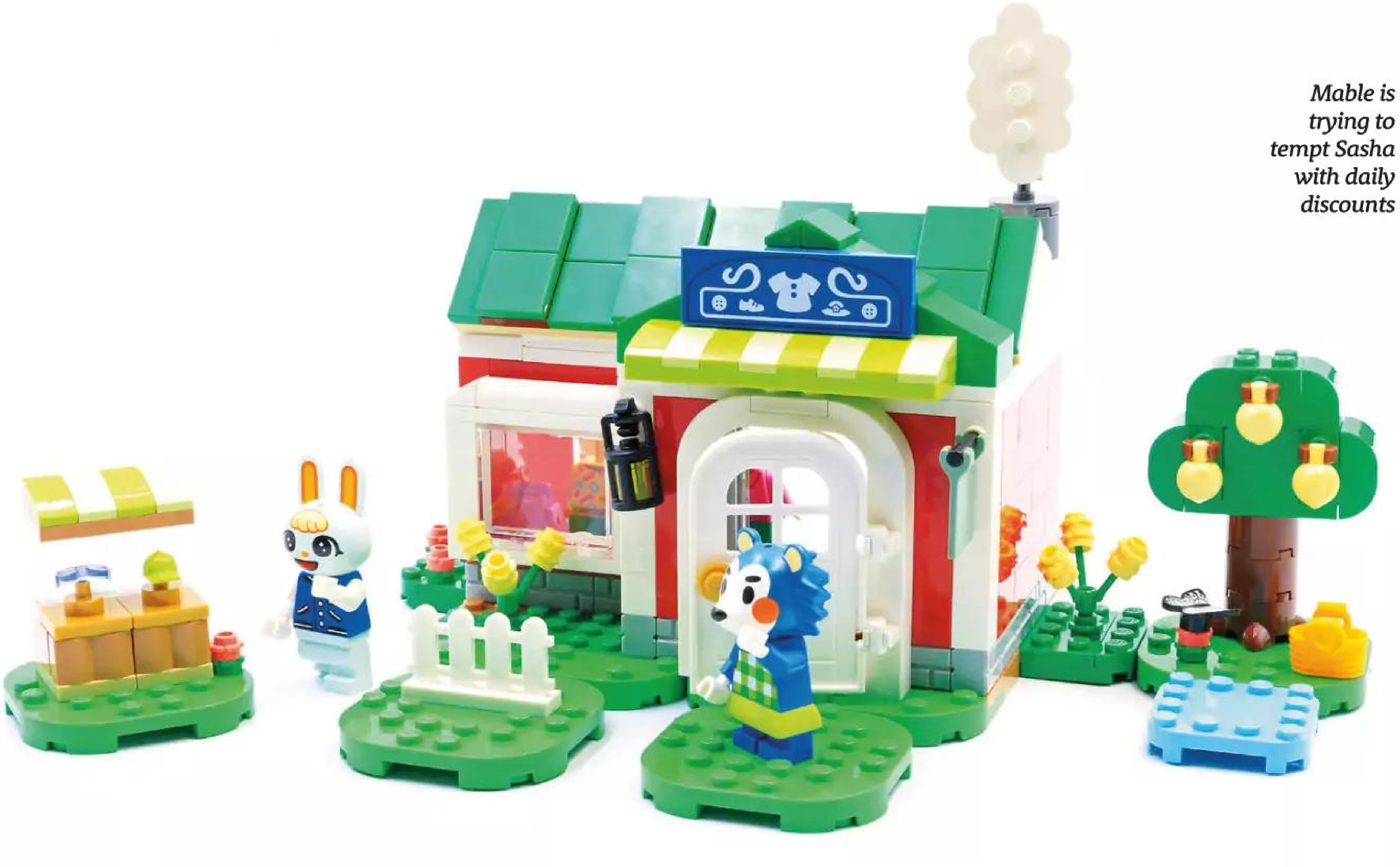
ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict
72
Short of a handheld games console, 72036 Baby Peach and Grand Prix Set offers everything you need to stage exciting races.

77055

Theme: *Animal Crossing* / ***Price:*** *£34.99, $39.99, €39.99* /
Recommended age: *6+* / ***Pieces:*** *322* / ***Minifigures:*** *2*

Able Sisters Clothing Shop



Mable is trying to tempt Sasha with daily discounts

With the changing seasons and festivals, residents of any island in Animal Crossing: New Horizons always need fresh outfits. Whether it's a floral dress for the summer or wrapping up warm in the snow, having a fully stocked wardrobe is essential. Sable creates new designs and Mabel is serving customers – the two work together to run Able Sisters seamlessly.

Most of the LEGO Animal Crossing sets rely heavily on minifigures to offer imaginative play, but dressing up and changing accessories makes this an instantly fun model. It's engaging because the characters are doing more than just sitting around drinking imaginary tea.

In the game the Able Sisters store is rather muted, with a definite cottagecore vibe. The right muted tones don't exist in the LEGO colour palette, but the brighter colour scheme still works here. The main window is large enough to display an outfit, just as in the game, and there are plenty of cute interior details. A few black tiles and curved elements come together to brilliantly depict a sewing machine, with printed 1x1 circles adding some dials.

Both minifigures are unique and Mabel's spiky hedgehog appearance is moulded perfectly. It's a little disappointing that Sable isn't included. 77055 Able Sister's Store is a nice set for fans of the franchise who want to give their minifigures a makeover.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
55
A fun set with engaging details rather than relying on the builder's imagination to create the world of Animal Crossing.

43266

Theme: *Disney* / ***Price:*** *£34.99, $39.99, €39.99* /
Recommended age: *9+* / ***Pieces:*** *474* / ***Mini-dolls:*** *1*

Cinderella's Dress

With a wave of her wand and a dazzling shimmer of magic, the Fairy Godmother transforms Cinderella's ruined dress into a beautiful blue ballgown. Featuring a huge skirt and elegant capped sleeves, finished with a pair of glass shoes, it is one of the most iconic costumes from Disney animation.

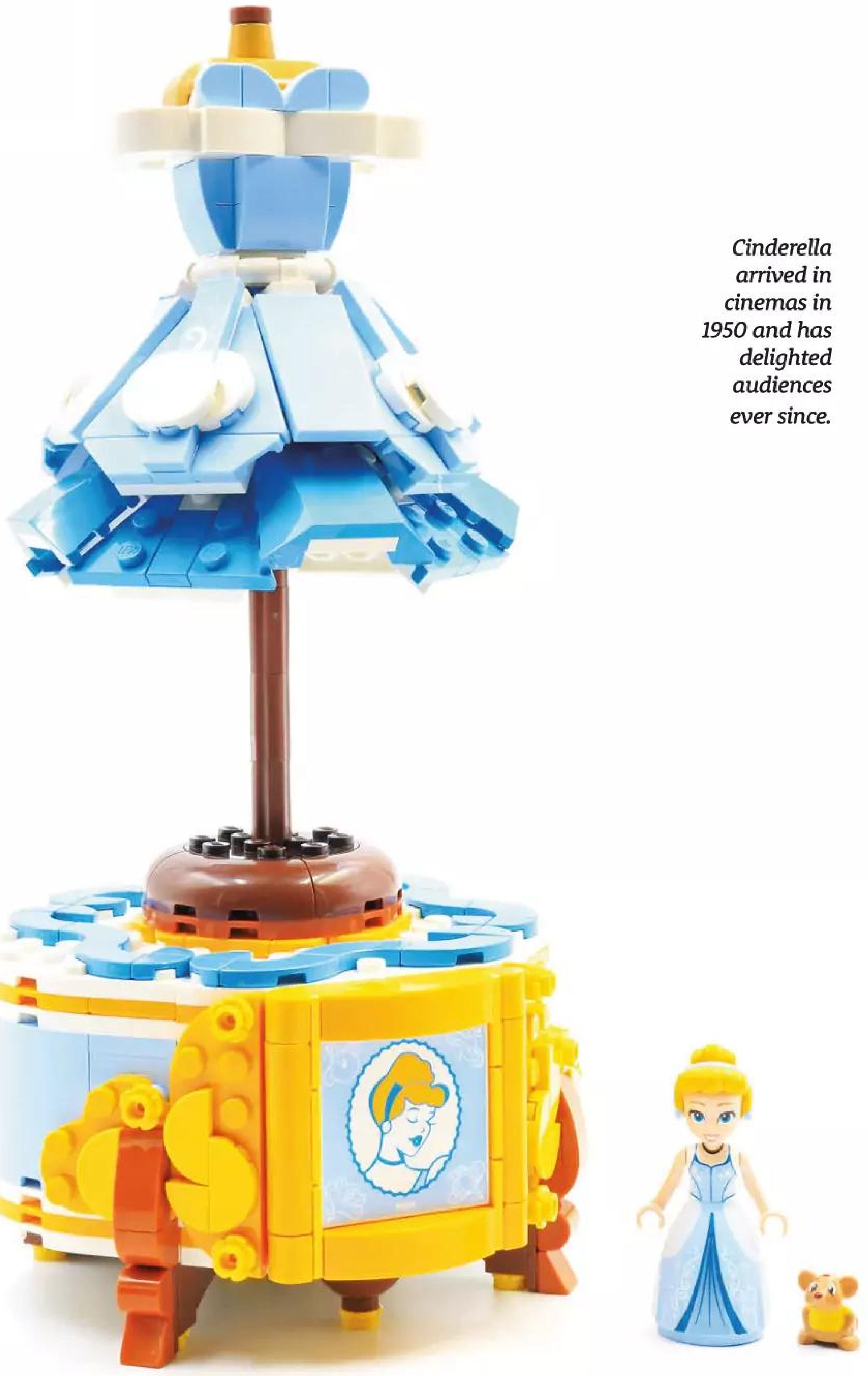
For the most part, the dress translates well into this model. Curved tiles recreate the tapered shape of the bodice while 1x2 arch elements mimic the capped sleeves. There are even a pair of LEGO heart tiles doubling as a knotted ribbon bow on the back. Things start to look a little odd with the skirt though…

Cinderella's ballgown is like a poofy cloud – something her new mini-doll captures perfectly. Although there are several layers to build up the volume, it is just too angular compared to the shape in the films. This is made even more frustrating by the fact that most of the set's elements go towards the box that the mannequin stands on. It's big, extremely repetitive and unnecessary.

Those pieces could easily have gone towards making a more accurate dress that truly encapsulates Cinderella. It's strange to spend so many parts on a display stand for the main event. The titular mini-doll is excellent, though.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
52
Cinderella's dress is a garment that several generations of moviegoers have dreamed of wearing… it's a shame that so many pieces went towards the box and not the fashion.



Cinderella arrived in cinemas in 1950 and has delighted audiences ever since.

43262

Theme: *Disney* / ***Price:*** *£59.99, $69.99, €69.99* /
Recommended age: *9+* / ***Pieces:*** *524* / ***Mini-dolls:*** *2*

Maleficent's & Cruella De Vil's Dresses

Even when crashing a party to curse a princess, Maleficent always dresses to impress… or at least terrify everyone around her. And Cruella De Vil somehow pulls off turquoise earrings with her otherwise monochrome ensemble. Disney villains may have dastardly plans, but they always look good enacting them.

Both of these villains have iconic silhouettes inspired by the eras their stories are set within. In the case of this set though, the designers opted for modern reinterpretations of their outfits. These would have worked far better alongside mini-dolls representing the live action versions of their characters instead of the iconic animated depictions.

Cruella's dress is a simple design that's inspired by her love of spots. You layer printed 2x4 tiles onto angular plates to make an almost pleated skirt that's very dynamic. LEGO rock elements then suggest a faux fur trim around the neckline and sleeves, with some angled tiles for additional shaping. It looks nice yet very simple on display. It's nothing like the 1920s fashion that Cruella wears in 101 Dalmatians and it would have made a lot more sense to include a mini-doll of Cruella from the live action prequel.

Elsewhere in the set, Maleficent's dress is a statement piece. It's more time consuming to build because of the transparent green tiles that need to be carefully placed to make the swirling patterns on the skirt. Dark pink then peeks through between the black of the skirt, adding a striking splash of colour. If all of that isn't dramatic enough, a pair of wings jut out from the bodice to hint at Maleficent's terrifying dragon form.

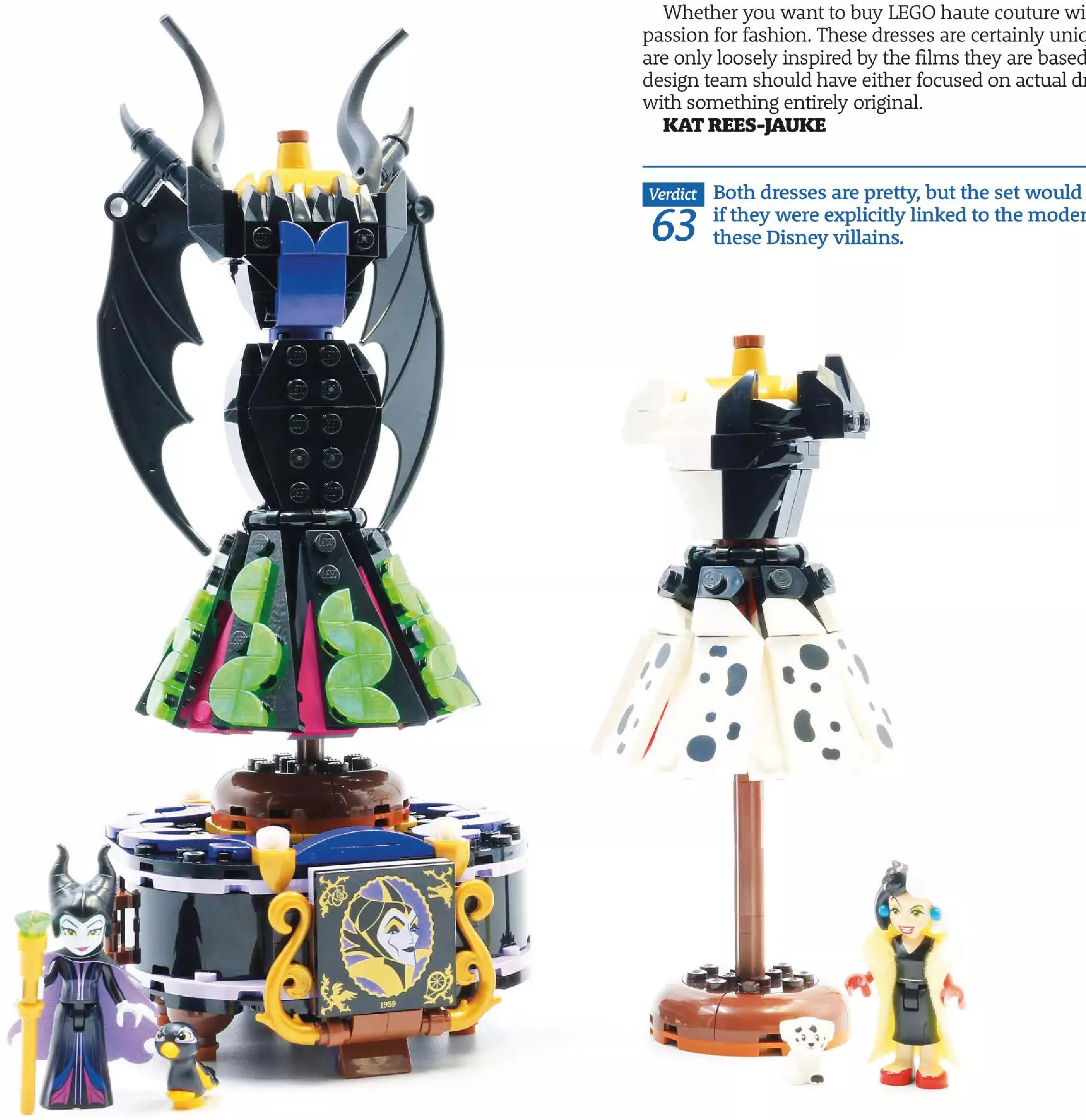
Maleficent's ensemble is clearly based on a mermaid dress. These originally began to appear in the late 19th century and then took the fashion world by storm in the 1930s as they became a popular choice for Hollywood starlets. Sleeping Beauty is set in 14th century Europe. It's absolutely fine that the design is a modern take on Maleficent's wardrobe, but again, a mini-doll inspired by live action Maleficent would have helped the set feel more cohesive. The 1959 Sleeping Beauty movie stayed close to 14th century fashion, whereas the 2014 Maleficent movie happily threw historical accuracy out of the window.

The stand is repetitive to build and completely uninteresting. There is no need to spend time building a box that does nothing except provide a space to stash the mini-dolls.

Whether you want to buy LEGO haute couture will depend on your passion for fashion. These dresses are certainly unique builds, but they are only loosely inspired by the films they are based on – perhaps the design team should have either focused on actual dresses or come up with something entirely original.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
63
Both dresses are pretty, but the set would be more cohesive if they were explicitly linked to the modern depictions of these Disney villains.



Maleficent is ready for the Met Gala.

WIN THIS SET!

LEGO
JANGO FETT'S STARSHIP
STAR WARS
ULTIMATE COLLECTOR SERIES
18+ | 75409 | 2970 pcs
Disney
STAR WARS
Jango Fett's Starship
Manufacturer: Kuat Drive Yards
Model: Firespray-31-class patrol and attack craft
Length: 21.5 m
Engines: F-31 drive engines
Hyperdrive: Modified class 1.0
Max Acceleration: 2,700 G
Weapons: Twin blaster cannons, Rapid-firing laser cannons, Concussion missile launcher, Minelayer, Void-7 seismic charges
Capacity: 1 pilot, 1 copilot, 6 prisoners, 3 passengers, 40 metric tons cargo

SUBSCRIBERS ARE ENTERED INTO A NEW **PRIZE DRAW EVERY** MONTH

(see page 83 for more information)

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE NOW AT www.**blocksmag**.com

T-shirts and Binders are available to buy separately from the Blocks Shop at **www.blocksmag.com**

CALL **07841 412199**

GET UP TO FIVE FREE MAGS!

SOME GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE TO

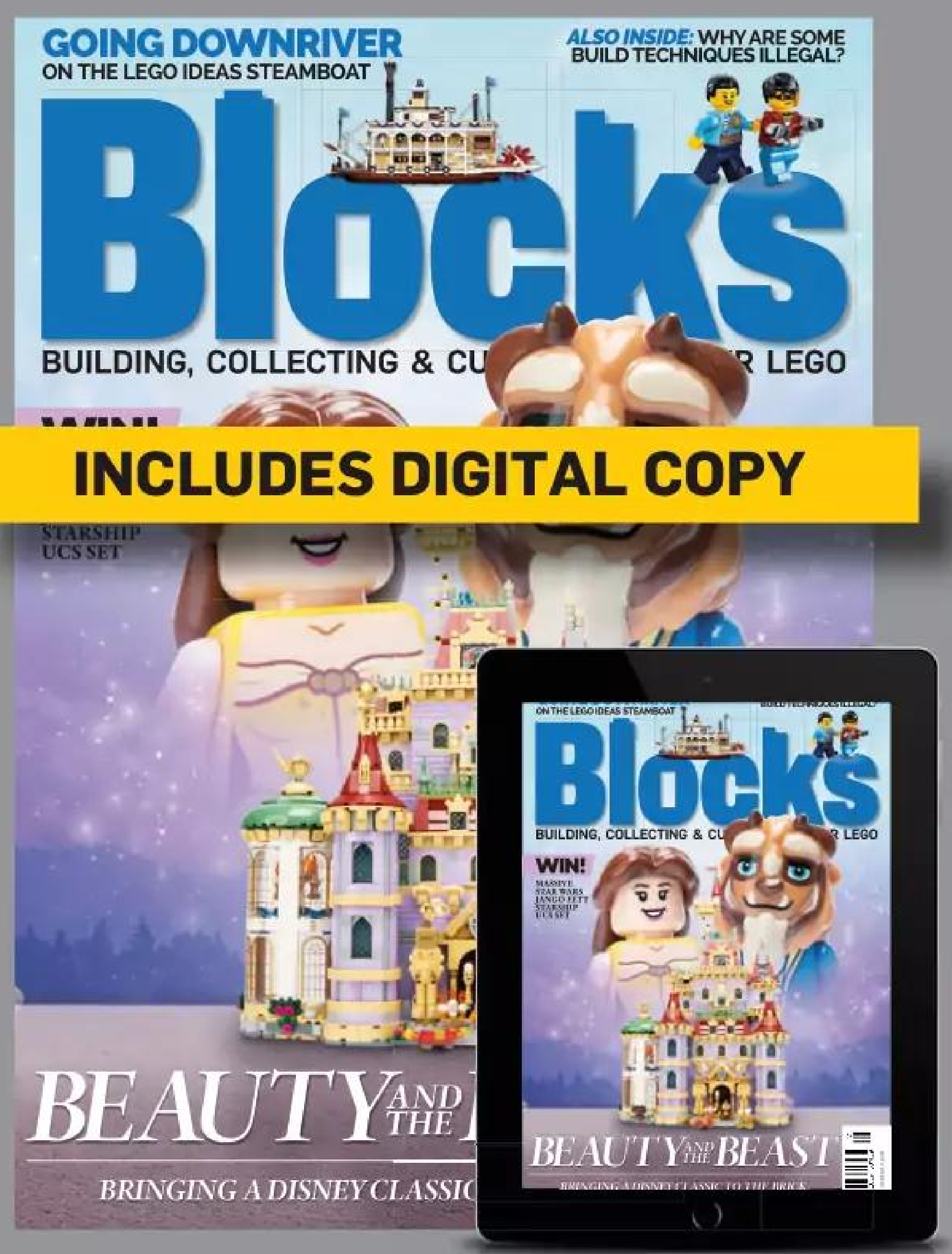
Blocks

- **Cheaper prices** than buying the magazine in store
- Receive the magazine **before it's in the shops**
- A new chance to **win a LEGO prize every month**
- **Free digital subscription** included
- **Free access to the digital archive** – includes every issue ever published
- Save money – **get up to five free issues**
- **Discounts** on select merch at the Blocks shop
- And **support** your favourite magazine!

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

UPGRADE YOUR LEGO HOBBY AND TAKE OUT A BLOCKS MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION TO GET YOUR FIX EVERY MONTH

12 MONTH DEAL



INCLUDES DIGITAL COPY

£64.90

INCLUDES X2 FREE MAGAZINES!

UK: £64.90
Europe:(airmail) £94.00
Rest of the world:
(airmail)£120.00

24 MONTH DEAL

INCLUDES DIGITAL COPY

£120

INCLUDES X5 FREE MAGAZINES!

UK: £120
Europe:(airmail) £180.00
Rest of the world:
(airmail) £220.00

12 MONTH GIFT DEAL

INCLUDES DIGITAL COPY

£89.88

X2 FREE MAGS, T-SHIRT, MINIFIG & BINDER!

UK: £89.88
Europe:(airmail) £118.88
Rest of the world:
(airmail) £133.88

10354

Theme: *Icons / **Price:** £229.99, $269.99, €269.99 / **Recommended age:** 18+ / **Pieces:** 2,017 / **Minifigures:** 9*

The Lord of the Rings: The Shire

How do you build a hole in the ground with LEGO bricks? Especially if it's not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, nor a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in… how do you build a hobbit-hole full of comfort?

GET THIS IF YOU LIKED

42670 Heartlake City Apartments and Stores

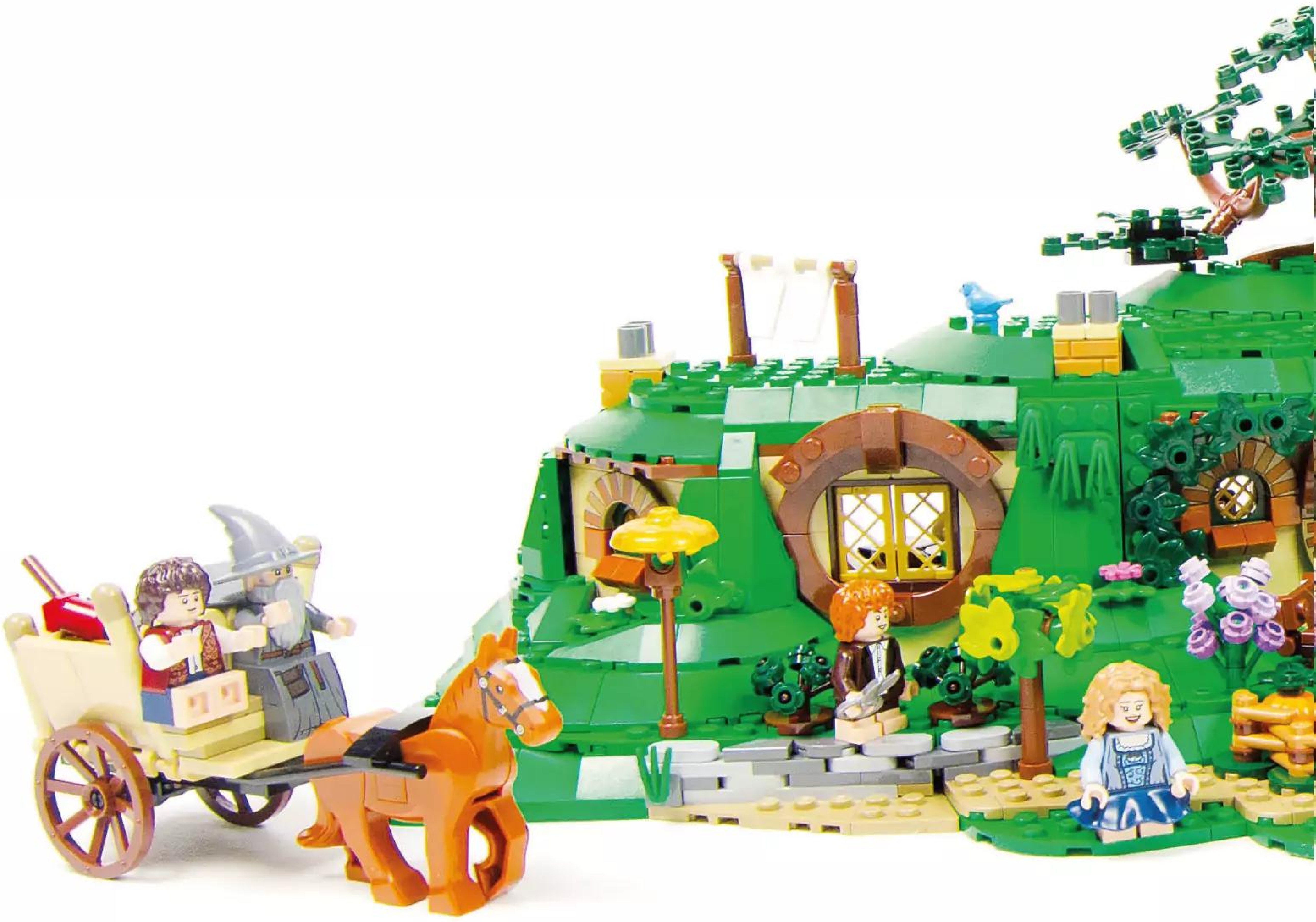
This modern set represents what's fun about city living, with both residences and commercial space. It includes lots of characters and accessories for the mini-dolls, making it fun to set up different scenes. If you enjoyed the way the set feels lived in and busy, then you'll also enjoy this Hobbit themed build.

10316 The Lord of the Rings: Rivendell

The Lord of the Rings arrived in Icons with the gorgeous Elf enclave of Rivendell. Many fans loved getting a collection of key characters, discovering the incredible building techniques and finding many beautiful, printed elements within the box. If you're one of them, then everything you enjoyed about that set carries over to 10354.

10332 Medieval Town Square

This Icons set is firmly placed in the medieval time period and offers a collection of buildings, with mini models to help populate the area and make it feel lived in. Rather than just one big building, the various structures provide a nice, customisable layout. Similarly, 10354 goes beyond Bilbo's home to present a larger environment.



The Shire is home to the hobbits, including a hobbit hole of great significance – Bag End, the home of Bilbo Baggins. It's the starting point of the adventures depicted in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. The location was last depicted in 2012's 79003 An Unexpected Gathering, so fans are looking for big improvements in this new version.

This set should have been called Bag End, not The Shire. The model only covers Bilbo's house along with some select areas of the yard where his birthday party takes place during the opening of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring.

That sequence inspired nearly everything about this model, with numerous easter eggs and references dotting both its interior and exterior. Gandalf must pass through the gate, with its 'No Admittance Except on Party Business' sign before opening the iconic round, green door, which even features the elaborate doorbell seen in the film.

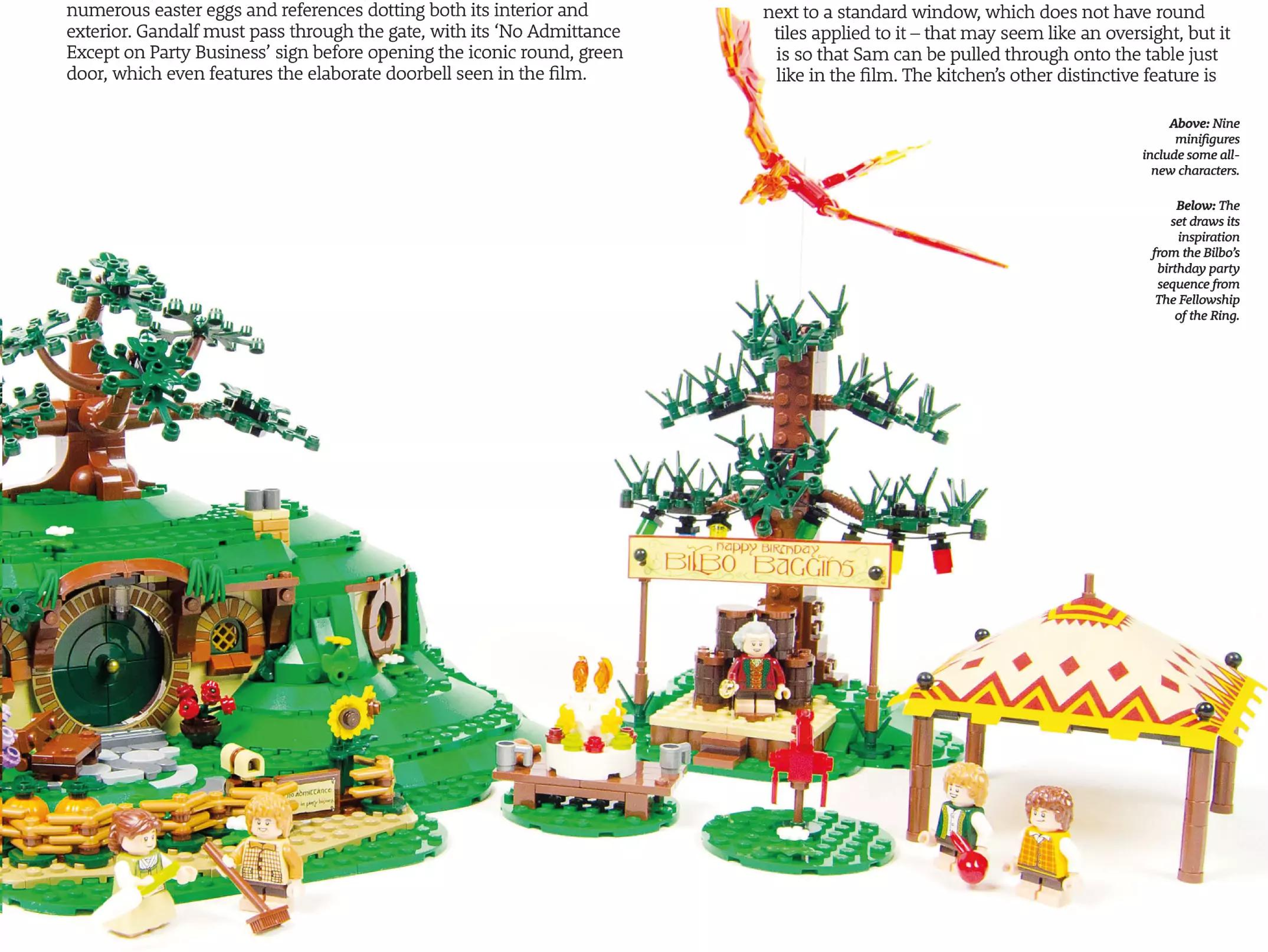
Inside Bilbo's front hall there are beautiful, printed tiles for rugs as well as an enormous bureau for Gandalf to hang his hat and cloak on before heading inside. There's a chest inside that contains Bilbo's Mithril armour, a bar of dragon's gold and, hilariously, cutlery hidden from the Sackville-Bagginses.

One of the most noticeable and impressive features of 10354 is the roughly 22.5 degree angle at which Bag End is constructed, so that the front of the hobbit hole is not a straight façade. While subtle, it's a fabulous visual change that greatly enhances the model's aesthetic.

It also naturally breaks the home into two wings, one on either side of the interior hall. One contains Bilbo's kitchen. The table is situated next to a standard window, which does not have round tiles applied to it – that may seem like an oversight, but it is so that Sam can be pulled through onto the table just like in the film. The kitchen's other distinctive feature is

Above: *Nine minifigures include some all-new characters.*

Below: *The set draws its inspiration from the Bilbo's birthday party sequence from The Fellowship of the Ring.*



Clockwise from right: 10354 includes more auxiliary builds than previous The Lord of the Rings sets.

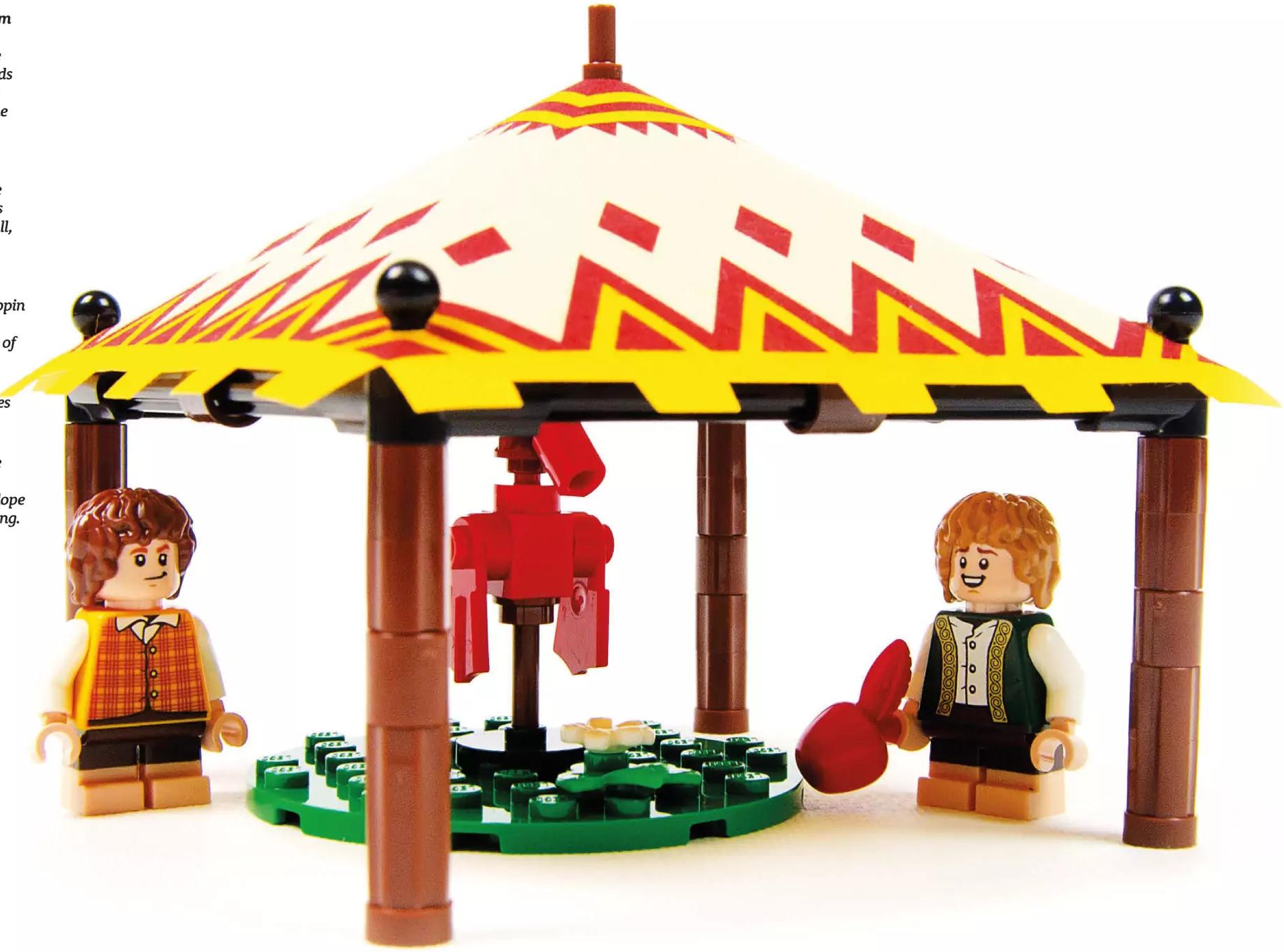
Bag End has three separate interior rooms – the entry hall, kitchen and study.

Merry and Pippin deal with the consequences of their actions.

Gandalf arrives in style.

A play feature switches a burning envelope for the One Ring.

Bilbo can be seated at his desk.



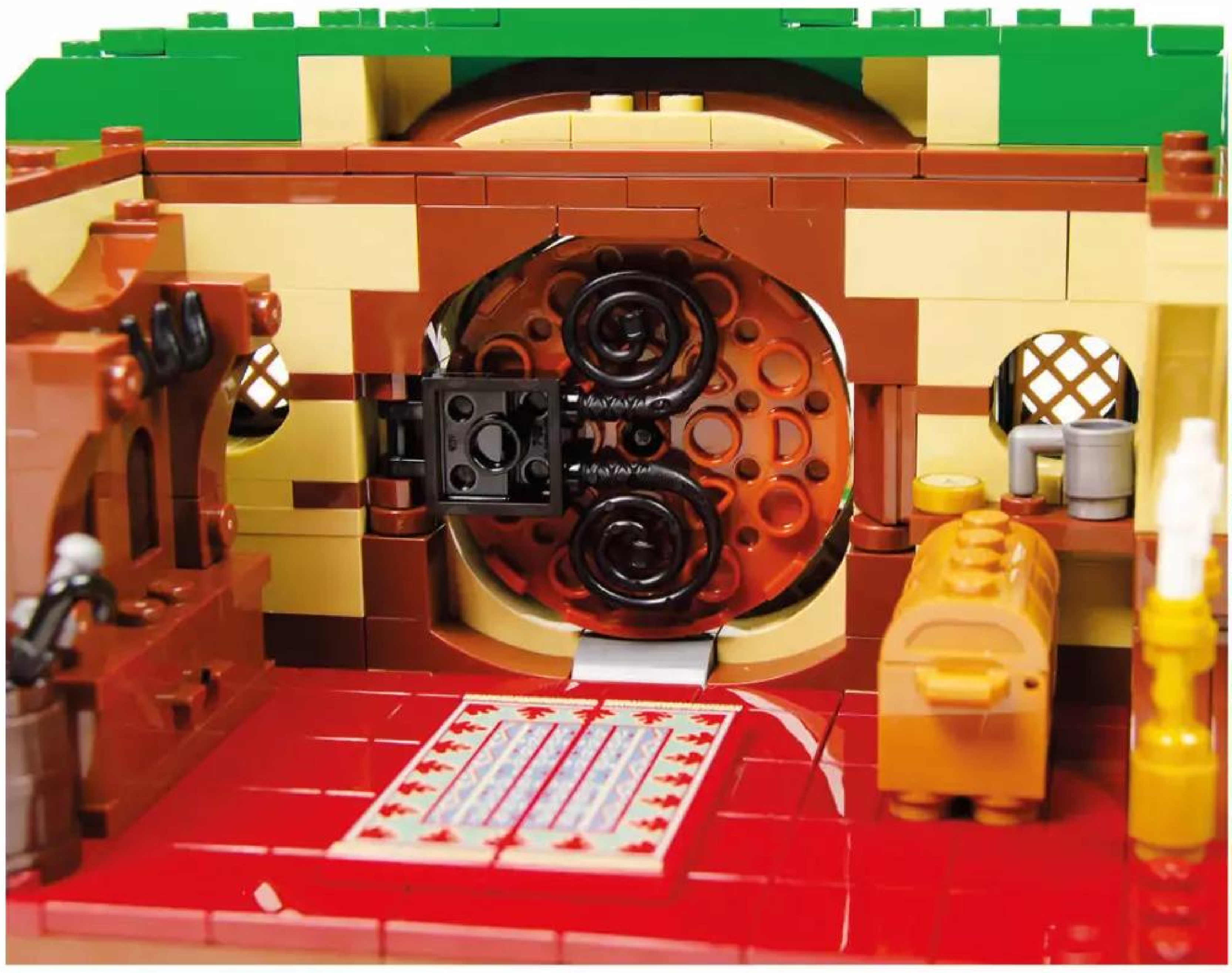
the fireplace, which includes a clever little feature that flips an envelope and the One Ring back and forth, mimicking the paper burning away. Play features can sometimes be out of place in 18+ models, but this one is excellent and feels very appropriate.

The hobbit hole's other wing features Bilbo's study with a small desk, where there is a copy of his work in progress, There and Back Again, which has a red cover as in the films. A smaller fireplace warms this area, which is otherwise lit by a small, round, window. Each of the rounded windows features new printed tiling that makes them look as if they are made of masonry bricks.

Outside the detail is no less impressive. A variety of SNOT techniques are used to angle green and brown bricks into all sorts of orientations. The end result is that the structure looks like it has been built right into a hill. A variety of different plants are dotted across these surfaces for Sam to prune while dropping some eaves. There is a fence at the front made from boomerangs, which is a surprising and delightful bit of parts usage. A portion of the roof, where the tree sits, can be removed so it is easier to access the hall and centre of Bag End.

Unlike the previous two The Lord of the Rings sets in Icons, 10316 Rivendell and 10333 Barad-dûr, The Shire includes several smaller models to support the main building.

There is the party tree where Bilbo makes his dramatic farewell exit. It's a disappointing part of the build – there is nothing natural or smooth about it, with a rectangular, symmetrical, straight up construction. Upon completion, this tree feels like it belongs in a different set. It is a shame because at its base is the model's second fabulous play feature, a rotating platform that allows Bilbo to disappear beneath a printed Happy Birthday banner. The contrast is stark, which is a shame. Then there is the distinctive tent under which Merry and Pippin light Gandalf's dragon firework, which appears in its exploded form atop the party tree. Here a plate can be placed beneath the tent with the unlit version, which can then be replaced with a blackened stump. The mischievous hobbits feature double printed faces – one side has them covered in soot from lighting the firework inside. Wavy



There
and
back
again

NINJAGO hair has been cast in dark grey to complete their post-explosion look.

Merry and Pippin's figures are just one part of an excellent lineup, which includes a total of nine different characters – three of whom have never appeared in LEGO form before. Rosie Cotton joins Mr. and Mrs. Proudfoot as the newcomers. All of them feature unique, detailed printing as well as double sided heads. The rest of the figures consist of Gandalf, the four primary hobbits and Bilbo. All of them have appeared before but here their characters feature unique printing. It's a fabulous collection of minifigures that perfectly support the set.

More than a decade's worth of new elements and techniques since the original brick Bag End, plus having almost three times as many parts to play with, make this latest model worthy of Peter Jackson's epic trilogy.

Due to the sustained interest in The Lord of the Rings, it was a matter of time before the LEGO Group revisited the most famous of all hobbit holes. The wait was worth it, as 10354 The Shire is a well-executed model with appealing figures that will delight fans of the stories. If displayed alongside Rivendell and Barad-dûr, the overall setup will command attention. While there are a few disappointing aspects, most notably the crude party tree that looks out of place alongside the rest of the set, 10354 The Lord of the Rings – The Shire is a successful addition ot the series.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI

Verdict

83

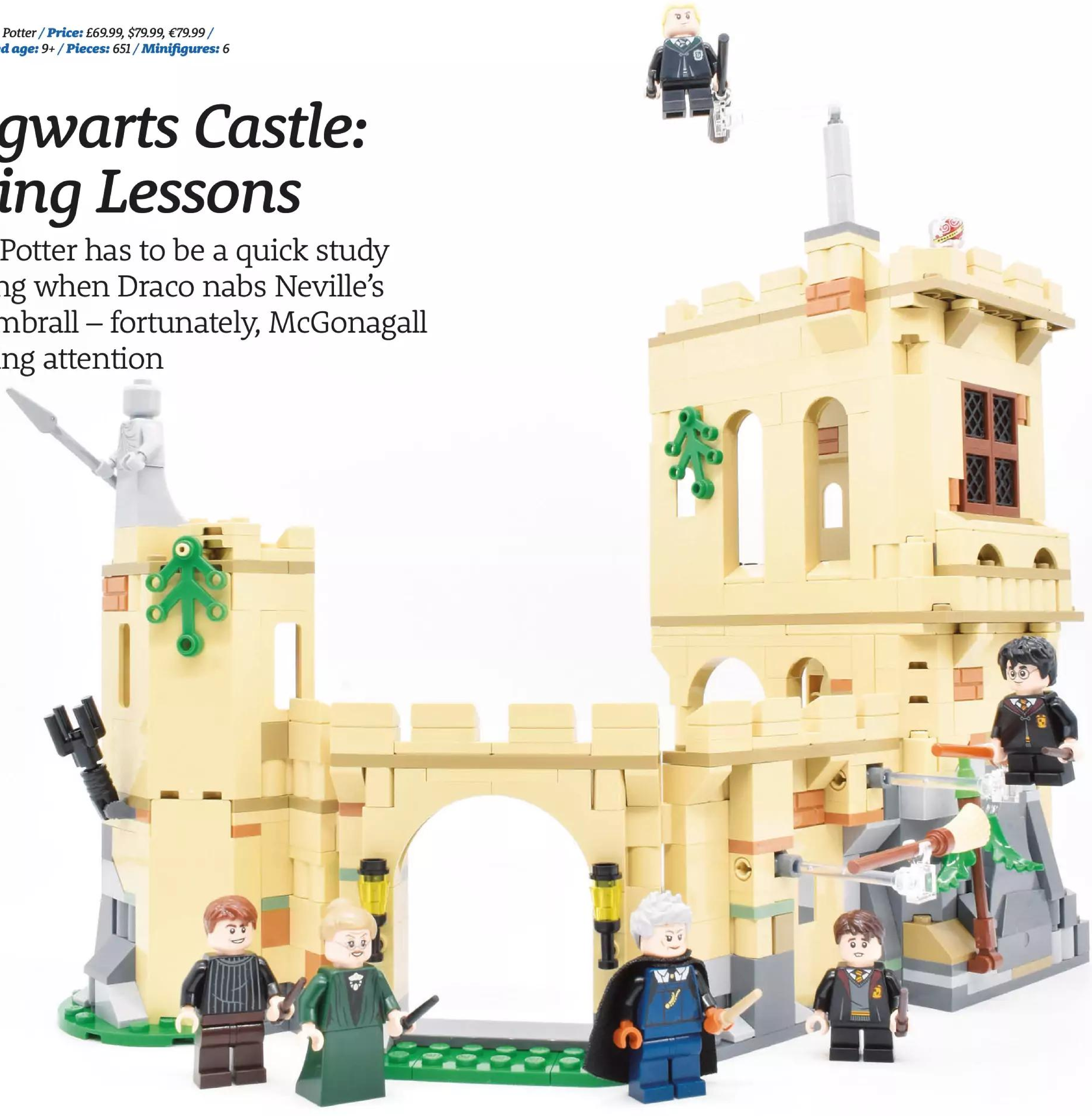
Excellent building techniques, attention to intricate detail and a fabulous selection of minifigures make The Shire a must own set for The Lord of the Rings fans.

76447

Theme: *Harry Potter* / ***Price:*** *£69.99, $79.99, €79.99* / ***Recommended age:*** *9+* / ***Pieces:*** *651* / ***Minifigures:*** *6*

Hogwarts Castle: Flying Lessons

Harry Potter has to be a quick study at flying when Draco nabs Neville's Remembrall – fortunately, McGonagall is paying attention



Harry Potter's discovery of the magical world is full of discovery. When he starts flying, he learns that he is an excellent flier like his dad, James Potter – who played for the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

76447 depicts a whole sequence from the first Harry Potter book, starting in Madam Hooch's class, through Harry and Draco's aerial sparring for Neville's Remembrall, to Harry's first Quidditch training session with Gryffindor captain Oliver Wood.

The model can be displayed in two ways – either fully folded out, with two towers and some castle wall in between, or as a single tower. Both have merits. The longer version feels more substantial and provides better opportunity for play, exposing the mechanism that allows builders to move the transparent poles up and down to simulate a flying motion.

Folded up, the set feels compact, with the middle archway lining up nicely with the Quidditch equipment store, and is completely asymmetrical, as befits a magical castle.

The set looks good either way – the designers continue to master the effect of creating a layered rocky outcrop, which is fun to build with a variety of pieces and angles – however the smaller tower lacks some external detail as it uses the corner wall panel without any stickers. It looks too clean and should have a more weathered aesthetic.

Four rooms are depicted inside – the trophy room, Professor McGonagall's office, the Quidditch storeroom and the Transfiguration classroom. Unfortunately, none of them stand out. The storeroom and Transfiguration classroom can be pulled out and replaced with other rooms (sold separately), as is the way with this so-called 'most detailed Hogwarts Castle yet'.

The same problem plagues 76447 as did the Hufflepuff Common Room and Girls Bathroom in 76435 Hogwarts Castle: The Great Hall – that the removable rooms are missing the robustness and detail that the standalone sets have, so feel wanting.

This is particularly true of the Transfiguration classroom, which lacks any real intricacy. It's not an issue of size, either – the just-released 76442 Hogwarts Castle: Charms Class proves that a lot can be done in a small space – so it's a shame the designers continue to add removable rooms that don't feel complete.

The risk, if this trend continues, is that the proposed 'most detailed Hogwarts Castle yet' will end up looking like a hodgepodge of half-finished rooms, the lacklustre quality of which is all the more highlighted by the superb attention to detail in the other standalone modules.

Still, there are a few positives to highlight about the model's interior. The trophy room has a printed shield plaque that will prove popular; McGonagall's office is sparsely decorated, but the pink lampshade does add some colour; and transfiguring a bird into a water goblet is duly created by a simple yet effective spinning desk.

There's also a strong cast of characters included in the set, which means builders can recreate the flying lesson, McGonagall's recognition of Harry's flying talents and Harry's first practice session. Of the six minifigures, the standout is Madam Hooch, although her minifigure has only undergone minor changes since her last appearance in 76395 Hogwarts: First Flying Lesson.

The other minifigures are all fair, even if they're just wearing school uniforms (Harry, Draco and Neville), a somewhat uninspiring turtleneck (Oliver Wood) or plain robes (McGonagall's minifigure in 76426 Hogwarts Castle Boathouse is still unmatched, although her broach design here is nicely done).

Also worthy of note is Neville's Remembrall, which is slightly out of scale given it uses a minifigure head, although this does mean there is plenty of space for an intricate printed design that has minor variations from its last appearance (also in 76395).

The challenge for 76447, really, is that it has come along so soon after its predecessor, 2021's 76395, which was £45 cheaper. It begs the question of whether the increase in size (387 pieces) has added any value. The answer is unfortunately inconclusive.

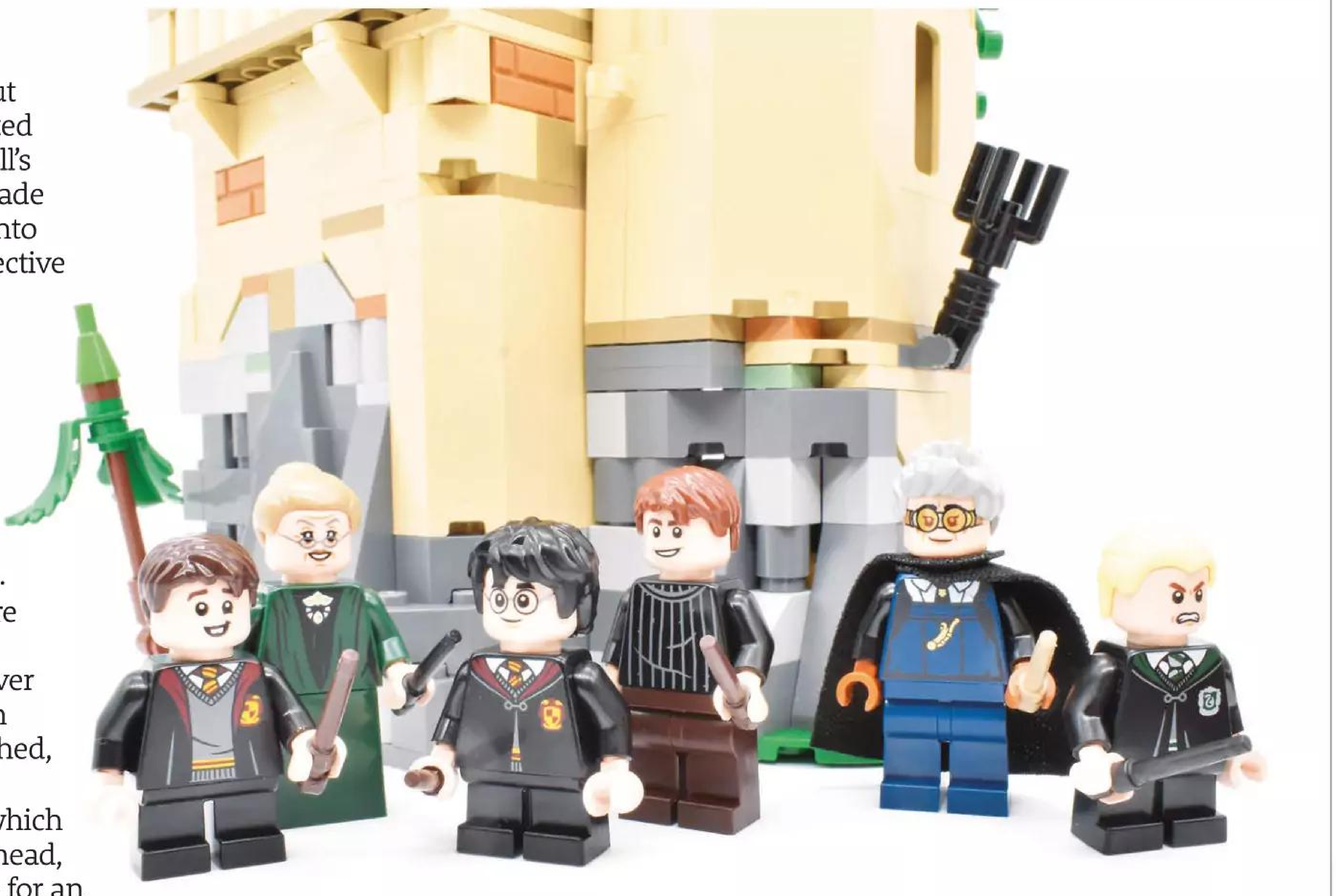
There is the increased sense of scale and it is good that this set operates as a standalone tower for the new Hogwarts layout, but for a scene set in the castle grounds with just some battlements nearby, the additions haven't been quite as successful as you would hope.

The flying mechanisms were included in 76395 and the trophy room was arguably better given the added detail and variety of trophy pieces; granted, it didn't have the Transfiguration classroom and office, but these rooms really aren't the highlight of this new set.

Unfortunately, 76447 doesn't quite soar but instead pootles along – perhaps in a few years the next iteration of this location will do it justice.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict **58** It is easy enough to play with this set and recreate a number of scenes, but it is underwhelming compared to the last brick depiction of this sequence.

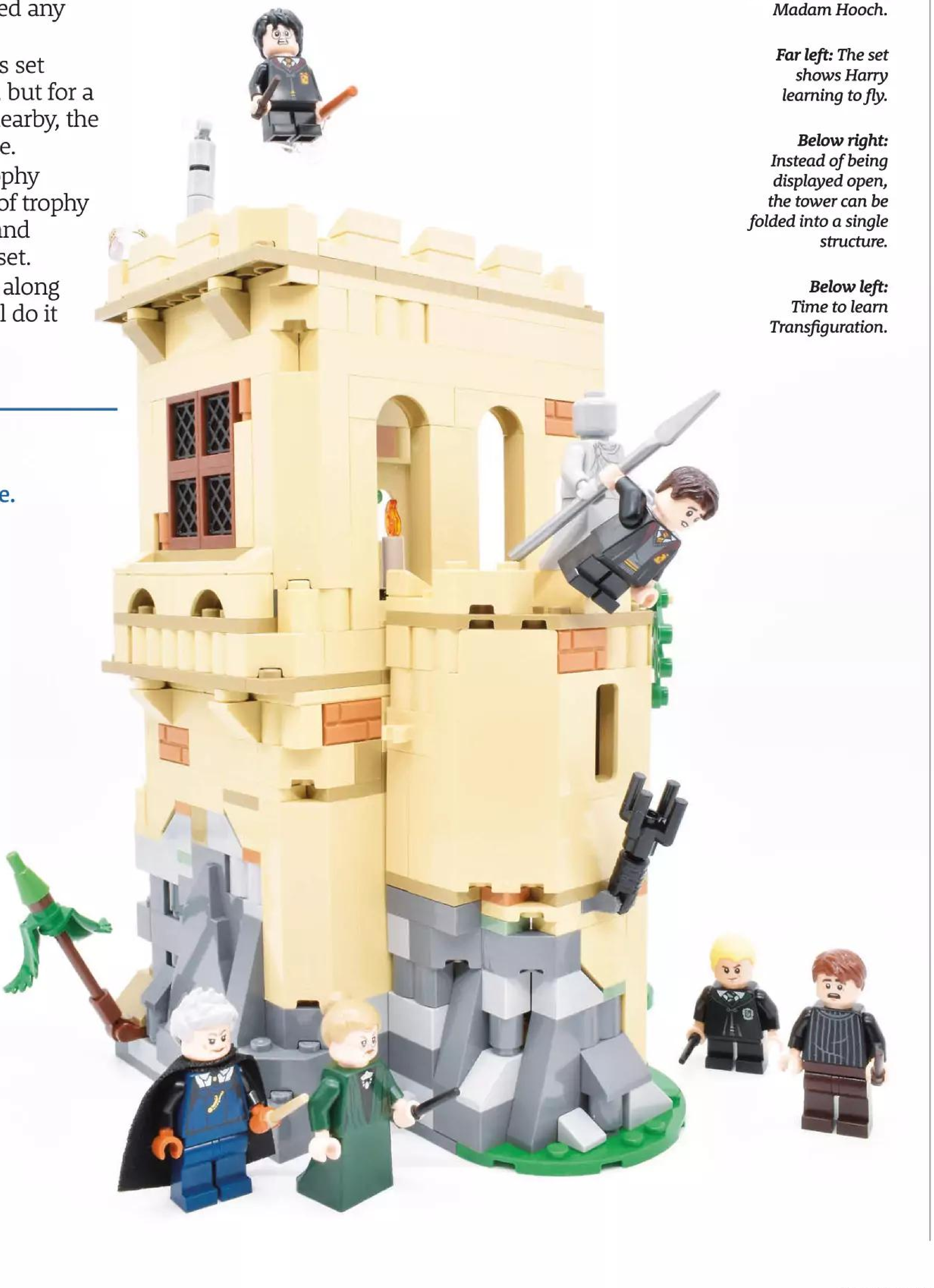


Above: *Six minifigures are included, including Madam Hooch.*

Far left: *The set shows Harry learning to fly.*

Below right: *Instead of being displayed open, the tower can be folded into a single structure.*

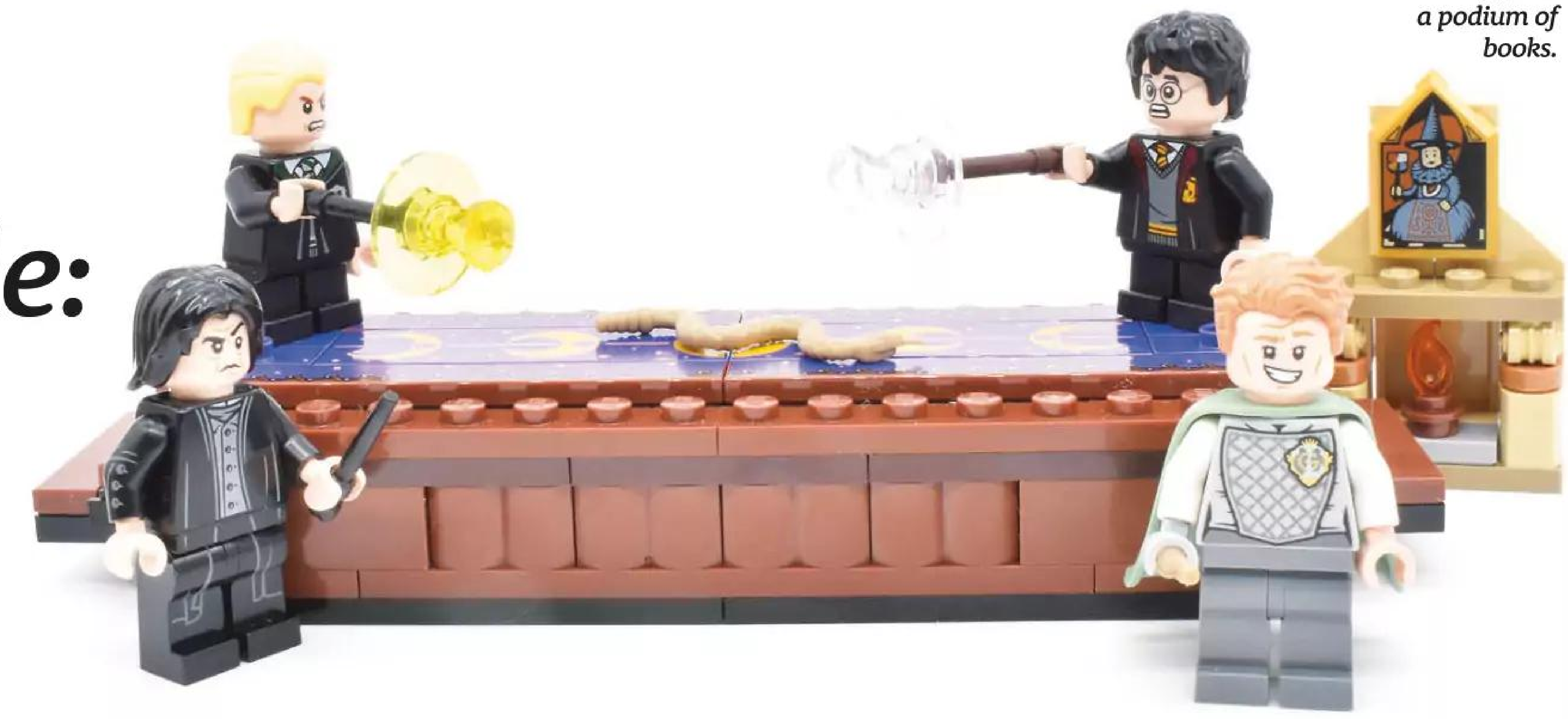
Below left: *Time to learn Transfiguration.*



76441

Theme: *Harry Potter* / ***Price:*** *£19.99, $24.99, €24.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *158* / ***Minifigures:*** *4*

Hogwarts Castle: Dueling Club



Flitwick is lecturing from a podium of books.

The duelling club is a small but pivotal moment in the Harry Potter books, as it's not only when the young witches and wizards (and the readers) are taught the fundamentals of duelling but it's also when everyone learns that Harry Potter speaks Parseltongue.

It's somewhat surprising, then, that despite the various iterations and waves of LEGO Harry Potter over the years, this is only the second model to depict the scene, 23 years after 4733 The Dueling Club.

At 158 pieces it's small, but that's no bad thing and it's packed with four solid minifigures, of which Gilderoy Lockhart holds the most appeal. His duelling attire is an attractive silver suit and he comes with a swishing mint-green plastic cape.

The face design however is where the figure truly shines – the graphic designers have amplified the raised eyebrow and dazzling smile from the last iteration just enough to truly capture the character's charm and cockiness.

As to the build, the whole table is built symmetrically, aside from the internal blocks, which are mirrored so that two levers can snugly sit side by side, creating a play feature that allows builders to blast figures off the table. It's simple, but well done. The printed purple plates also have an attractive celestial design.

A few extra spell pieces might have added some variety to the play potential, but for its scale and price point, this set is a winner.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

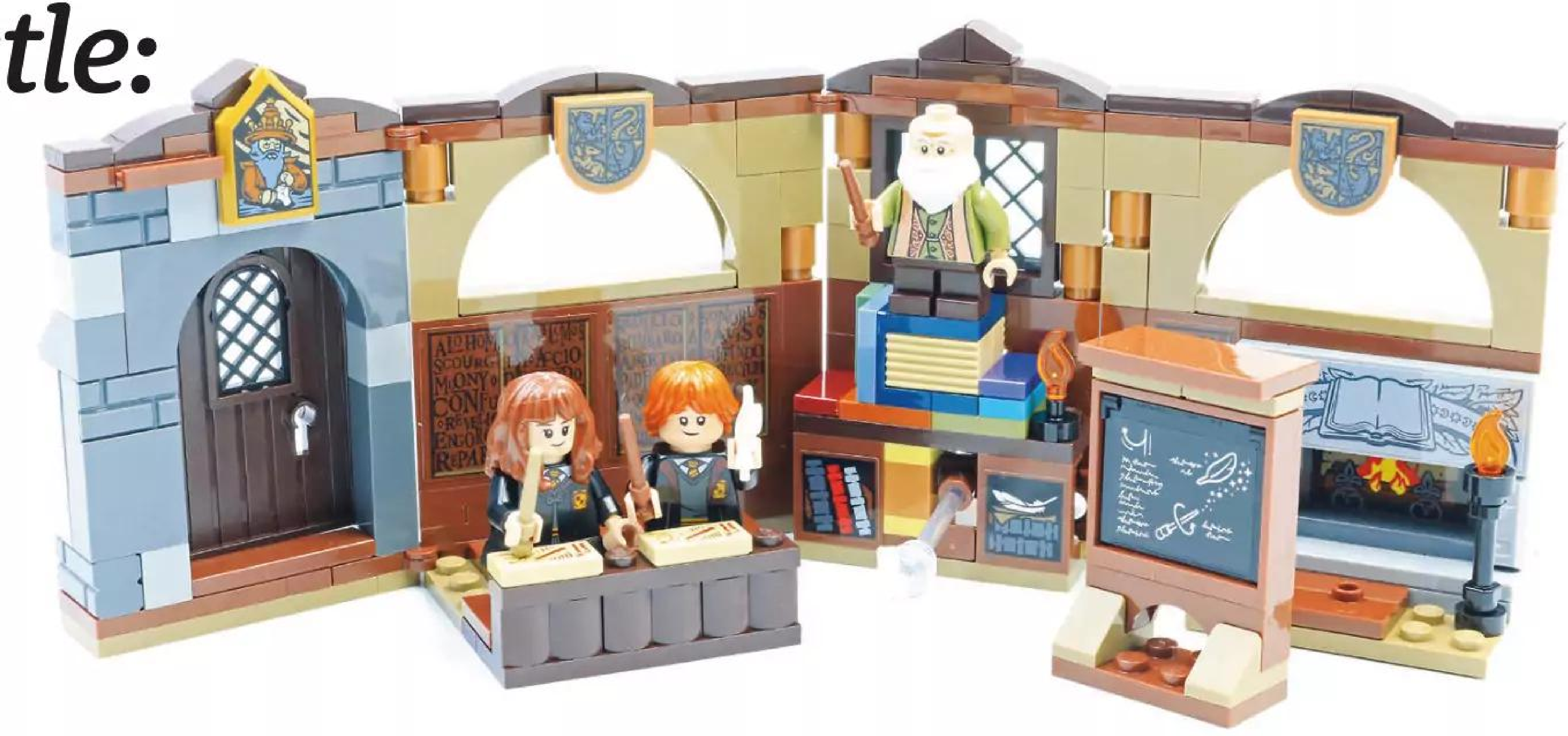
Verdict
62

As a set below £20, 76441 is quite simple in both concept and execution, but it still shines. You will definitely be charmed by the Lockhart minifigure.

76442

Theme: *Harry Potter* / ***Price:*** *£17.99, $19.99, €19.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *204* / ***Minifigures:*** *3*

Hogwarts Castle: Charms Class



This is the first duelling club set in 20 years.

Things get explosive during levitation class at Hogwarts. While it may be a simple charm, some pronunciation errors backfire spectacularly for many of the students, leaving Professor Flitwick short on feathers. Although the first magic lesson leaves a lasting impression, this set will not.

Flitwick stands on his recognisable stack of books, from where he can regale students while balancing precariously. The etched spell detailing on the walls is achieved via stickers. It's certainly recognisable at this scale but is underwhelming on its own.

The build follows the same principles as the other magic lessons in this style, offering an interior with movable items that can all be safely stored when not in use, as the whole model can easily fold up. What makes 76442 a little more interesting is its play feature. A tiny Technic mechanism lets the feather float in midair, mimicking Professor Flitwick's demonstration. It adds some much-needed dynamism to an otherwise static set.

76442 Hogwarts Castle: Charms Class is intended to be combined with 76435 Hogwarts Castle: The Great Hall, so offers very little as a standalone set.

Only Professor Flitwick is exclusive and it's a shame the designers didn't include different students rather than repetitions of Ron and Hermione, even if their pronunciation battle during class is infamous. Without another exclusive minifigure or interesting techniques, 76442 just feels like an excuse to repackage Ron and Hermione, in a build that doesn't offer anything particularly interesting.

KAT REES-JAUKE

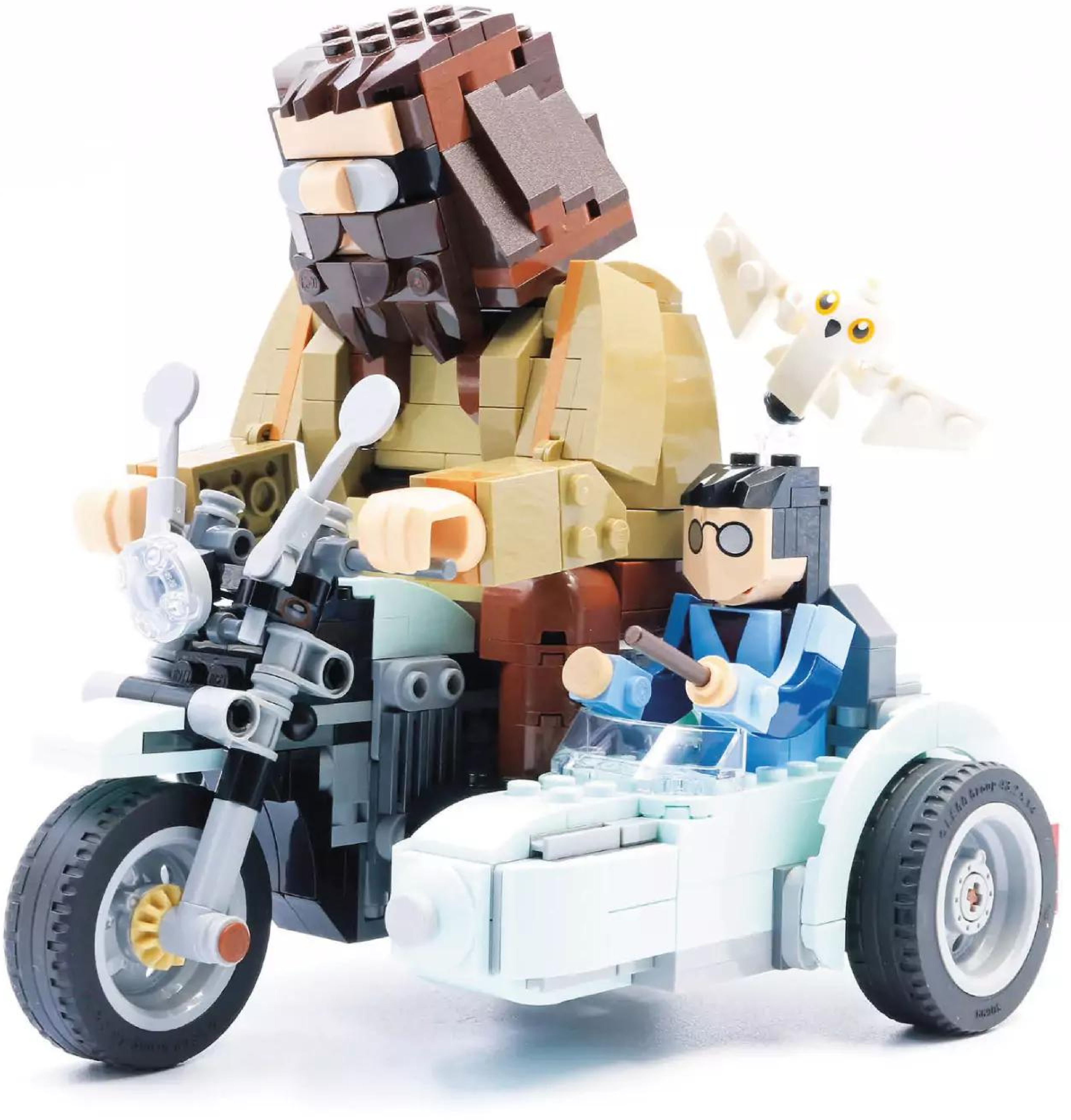
Verdict
38

Apart from the exclusive version of Professor Flitwick, there is nothing appealing about this set – the build is basic and many of the details are achieved through stickers.

76443

Theme: *Harry Potter / **Price:** £44.99, $49.99, €49.99 /*
Recommended age: *9+ / **Pieces:** 617 / **Minifigures:** 0*

Harry & Hagrid's Motorcycle Ride



Hedwig flies alongside Harry and Hagrid.

In a desperate attempt to escape the encroaching Death Eaters, Harry agrees to a dangerous plan to go unnoticed as he leaves Privet Drive for the last time. It's a tense flight as magic darts through the sky and Hagrid's driving skills are put to the test. Considering all of the emotion associated with this opening to Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, recreating it in expressionless figures is an ambitious choice.

The motorcycle itself is well designed. It looks very similar to the movie and using light aqua results in something quite close to the original weathered paint job. A strong chassis is mainly made from System bricks and there are a few curved tiles for the tailgate. Minifigure rackets double perfectly as the wing mirrors, while small Technic tubes make even smaller handlebars. It looks like a working motorcycle, even if some of the proportions are a little strange – given that it is magic and flies though, the designers can definitely take some creative liberty.

There are also great SNOT techniques for the sidecar. Its ovular shape is achieved through building in every direction, finished by curved tiles for the wheel arch. Technic pins connect it to the motorcycle and it's strong enough to withstand a magical battle across a living room. Unfortunately all of the hard work that goes into making the vehicle pleasing is completely let down by the figures.

Both characters are too static. The sidecar is a tight squeeze even in the film, but Harry still looks too squashed into it in this model. His arms are stiff arched tiles with studs at the ends that intend to mimic hands. A shield-like element is then used for his face… which could double as something from a horror movie. There's no expression or hint of a neck. Trying to make biological anatomy out of LEGO bricks is challenging and even constraction figures, which had the luxury of specially moulded faces, didn't always succeed… but without any hint of a real face, this model is a disaster.

Aside from his face, Hagrid is a little better than Harry, but he features a strange mix of static limbs and a dynamic coat. Surprisingly, he actually towers over Harry a bit too much – Hagrid may be half-giant but the size difference is exaggerated in 76443. His face works better because he's wearing goggles and there's good detailing in his beard and hair, but his super straight legs and arms look odd beside a coat that is flapping in the wind.

There's nothing wrong with using the LEGO System to try stylising and abstracting different subject matter – but the resulting model still has to be visually appealing. Other themes, such as Disney, Star Wars and Marvel, have delivered characters in different ways and they have often been successful. These figures though strip away all of Harry and Hagrid's character, meaning that they don't feel like the fictional characters fans know and love. 76443 Harry & Hagrid's Motorcycle Ride is a strange concept that doesn't really work to capture this integral scene.

KAT REES-JAUKE

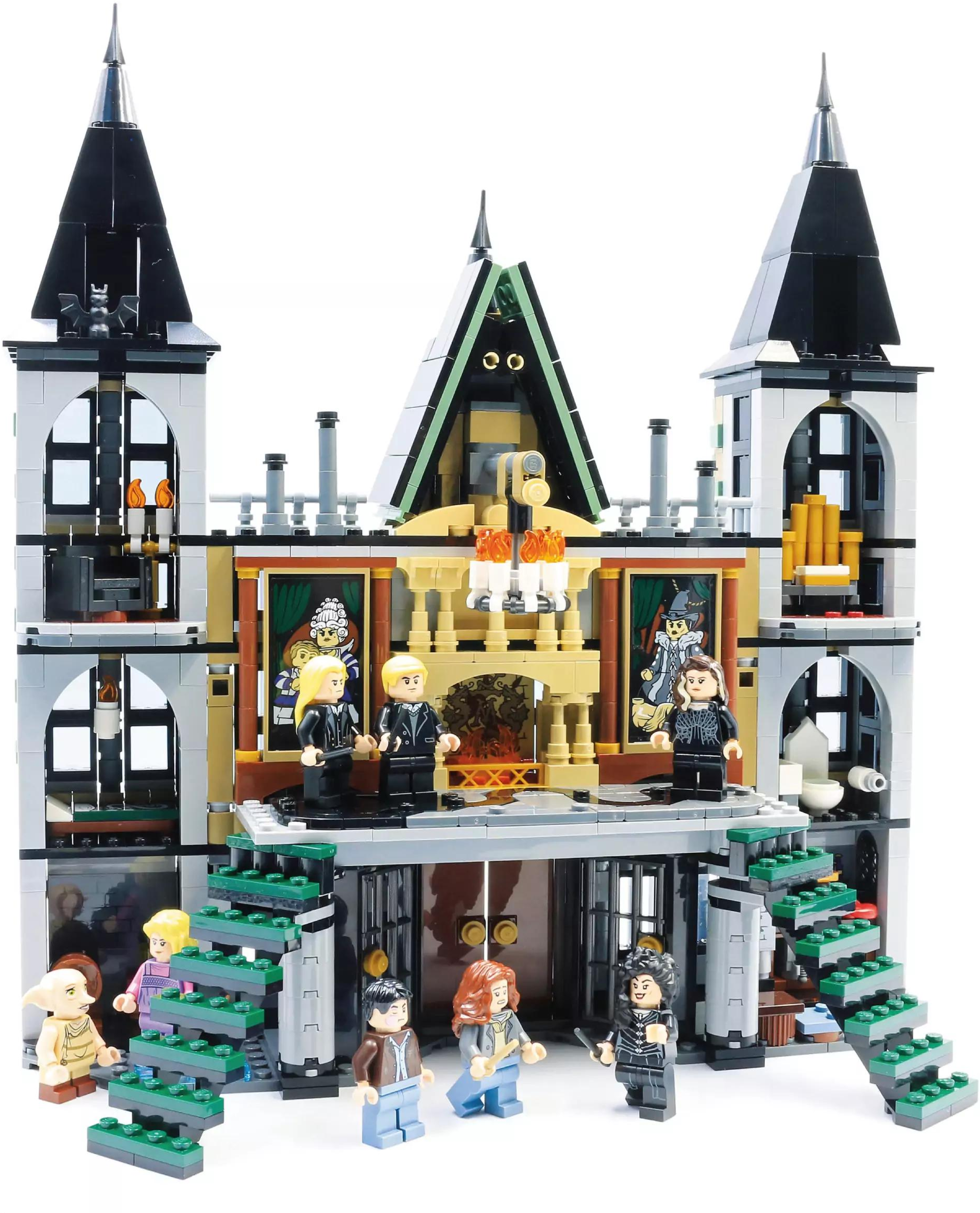
Verdict **32** **Experimentation is encouraged, but this is a concept that should have stayed on the drawing board – the figures don't look right from any angle and detract from the vehicle.**

76453

Theme: *Harry Potter* / ***Price:*** *£129.99, $149.99, €149.99* / ***Recommended age:*** *10+* / ***Pieces:*** *1,601* / ***Minifigures:*** *9*

Malfoy Manor

While the peacocks might seem welcoming, you'll soon find a much more slithery animal motif inside



When he is summoned to the sprawling Malfoy residence in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Severus Snape's first impression is described as: "The high hedge curved with them… a pure white peacock strutting majestically along the top." Malfoy Manor has stood for generations, expanded under each owner, with the Malfoys adding treasures and artwork to decorate the interior over the years. Behind a gloomy, gothic façade, there is magical decadence within. It becomes the Death Eater headquarters after the Battle of the Department of Mysteries, privy to countless dark secrets.

Although the film certainly captured the grandness of the manor, the peacocks that greet every visitor are noticeably absent on screen. Thankfully the LEGO design team didn't forget them – foliage elements double as flared tails, while white horn pieces suggest slender heads. They look absolutely amazing at this scale and can be perched next to the imposing metal gates. The recent gargoyles sit on each of the pillars supporting the gates, which add a sense of foreboding as they silently watch those who pass through.

Gothic architecture rises up from grey baseplates to create the foundations of the manor. There's a fountain at one end, which uses snake detailing to embody the Malfoy history with Slytherin, with a bust of a duelling wizard at the other. Thin columns line the entrance. This set does an amazing job of balancing the architectural detailing with references to the film and looks spectacular as a result.

A mixture of grey and dark tan bricks add texture to the walls, with sand green 1x1 tiles creating columns on each corner. Meanwhile 1x1 cylinders suggest columns between every window, which are framed in dark tan for contrast. There are railings across the balcony and minifigure handcuffs brilliantly recreate swirling metal designs. There are also more snake motifs and the Malfoy crest decorates the top floor to make sure no visitors mistake the residence as belonging to anyone else.

Inside there are a mixture of rooms that appear in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows and some that were never seen, like the kitchen that definitely has staff to cook because there's no way that Narcissa Malfoy is whipping up a lobster bisque. A pipe organ is situated on one of the top floors – according to the books it should be in the drawing room, but this is a magical home so things could easily move around through redecorating spell work.

A highlight of the drawing room itself is the rug. A complicated pattern of black and sand green tiles eventually comes together to form the infamous Death Eater symbol. It's later covered by the large meeting table, but this is removable so that the pattern can be on display.

Although the living area is spacious and decadent, the cellar is small and cramped. Water leaks across the floor through some dotted transparent blue tiles, while a spider hangs out on the wall. It feels decrepit and forgotten even in such a small space. A cell door then completes the room as it doubles as the Malfoys' prison for unwanted guests and enemies of Voldemort.

This isn't just a decorative model though – 76453 Malfoy Manor is full of play. Much of the set focuses on providing play opportunities and there is a great working feature in the drawing room. Pulling a pin in the chandelier allows it to drop on unsuspecting witches below, recreating Dobby using magic to help his friends escape.

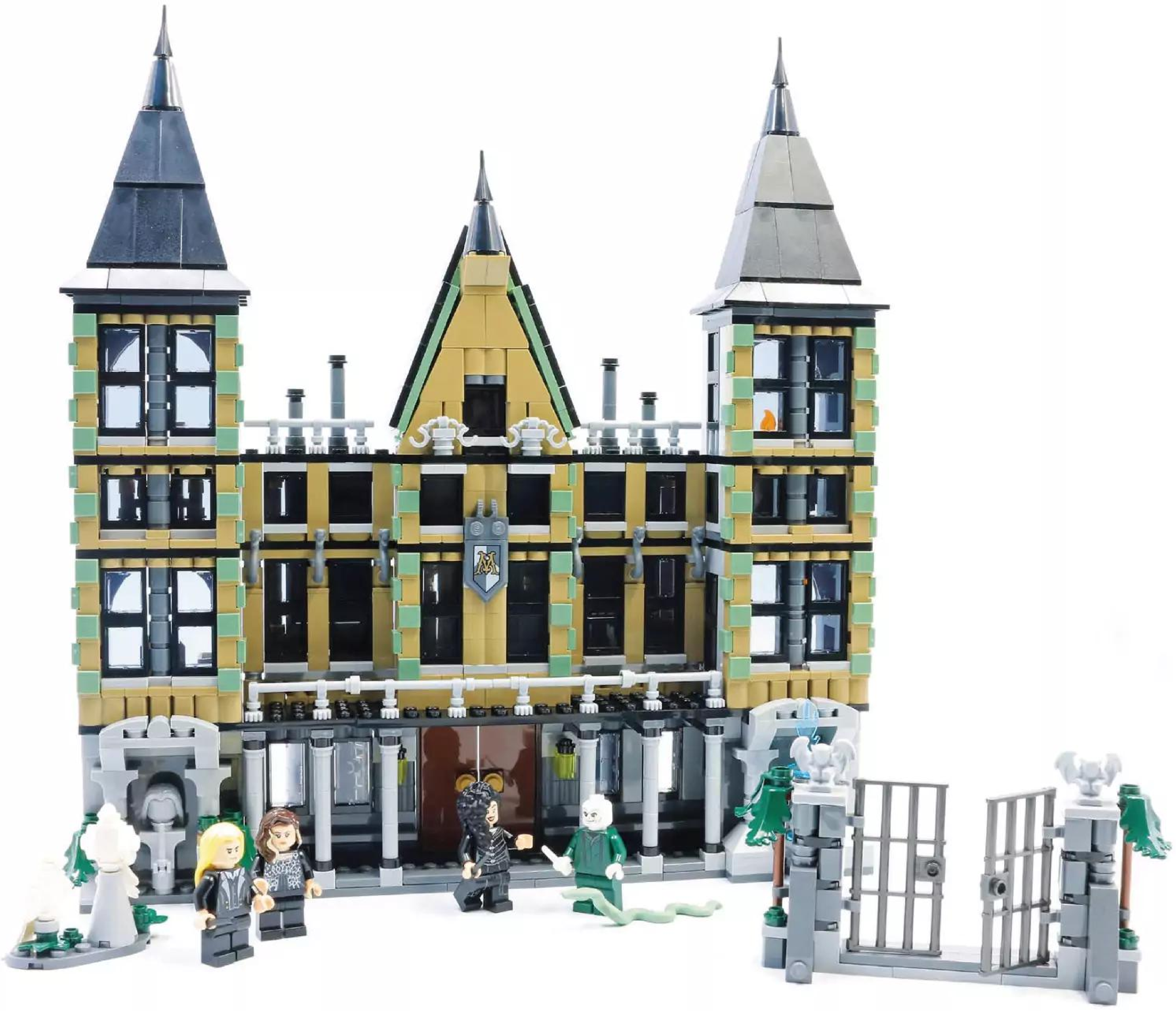
All of the minifigures are unique to this set and this is only the second time Narcissa Malfoy has appeared since her debut in 2011. Surprisingly she's not as detailed as that previous minifigure, though the updated hair piece captures her blonde streak far better. Both Lucius and Draco are decked out in suits, with the latter wearing his school blazer underneath. Bellatrix is definitely the standout as her minifigure perfectly captures her manic expression.

Luna and Hermione are both in their Deathly Hallows outfits from the scene in which they are captured at the manor, with Dobby providing some much needed house elf support. Harry has an interchangeable expression to mimic Hermione's stinging jinx spell when they're caught by Snatchers. In fact, the only minifigure who disappoints is Voldemort. Not only is his minifigure exceptionally plain, but this set is based on scenes in which he isn't even present – including Ollivander would have made more sense.

That's a tiny complaint for what is otherwise an incredible set though. It's one of the key locations in the Deathly Hallows and it has translated into a set that is full of play potential or ready to serve as the centrepiece for a gothic LEGO display. It is the first time fans have been offered Malfoy Manor as an official set, so it's a must buy for any Slytherin.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
78
This is a great rendition of Malfoy Manor at minifigure scale, with a convincing façade and some interior space for placing minifigures.

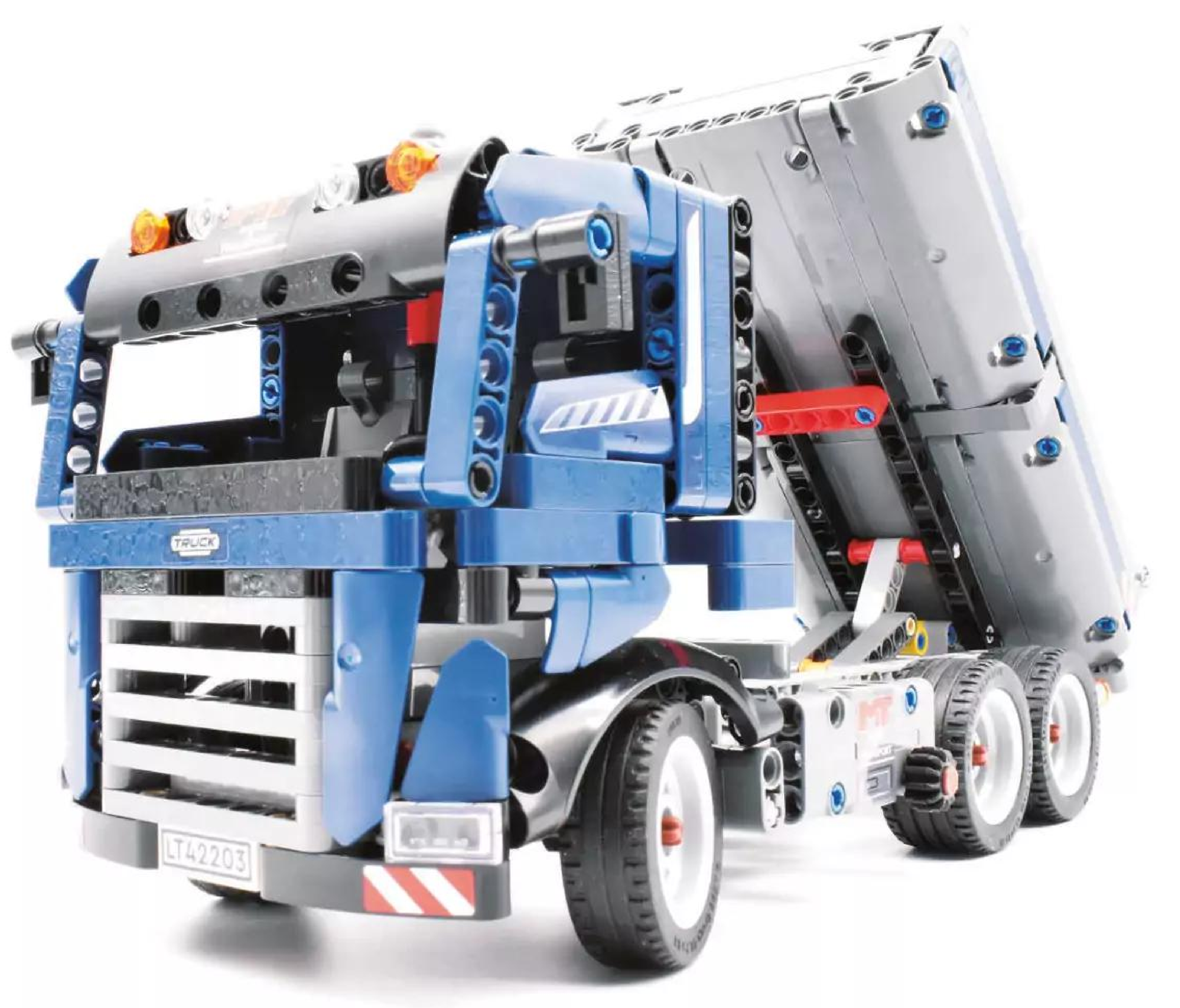


Far left: A tense reunion takes place in Malfoy Manor.

Left: A detailed exterior is covered in Slytherin motifs.

42203

Theme: *Technic /* ***Price:*** *£44.99, $49.99, €49.99 /*
Recommended age: *9+ /* ***Pieces:*** *462 /* ***Minifigures:*** *0*



Tipping Dump Truck

Although this is not the first Technic dump truck, the construction vehicle has more typically been represented in the LEGO portfolio by smaller sets. 42203 is made up of 462 pieces, compared to the vehicle's last iteration, 42147 Dump Truck, which had 177, and at the very least looks all the better for the increase.

This is a smart-looking model, even if the navy and grey colours are a bit plain. A variety of dark blue fin pieces are used to great effect to create the cab, which begins the build before moving onto the trailer and, finally, the tipping bed. A few black beams add a little colour variation. A knob on the cab roof lets you steer the truck and the cab doors open (but there's nothing of note inside, nor is there an engine).

A few stickers add some welcome but non-essential details, such as a company logo and number plates, with one particularly inspired piece of graphic design reading 'Truck'... well, it's not wrong.

The set's main function is the tipping bed, which, with a twist of a knob on the vehicle's set, extends up. The mechanism is solid, making use of the linear actuator piece, and when fully extended strikes a decent silhouette. The end flap also naturally hinges open when the bed is up. It's a shame, however, that the hydraulic cylinders that might be expected from this type of vehicle are absent here, given the general visual accuracy.

This vehicle makes for a worthy introduction to Technic for all ages, showing how functions can be fully embedded into a set's structure. Building in the tipping feature adds a little more fun to the typical play that comes with toys based on construction vehicles, although the lack of visual appeal may limit the interest for younger builders.

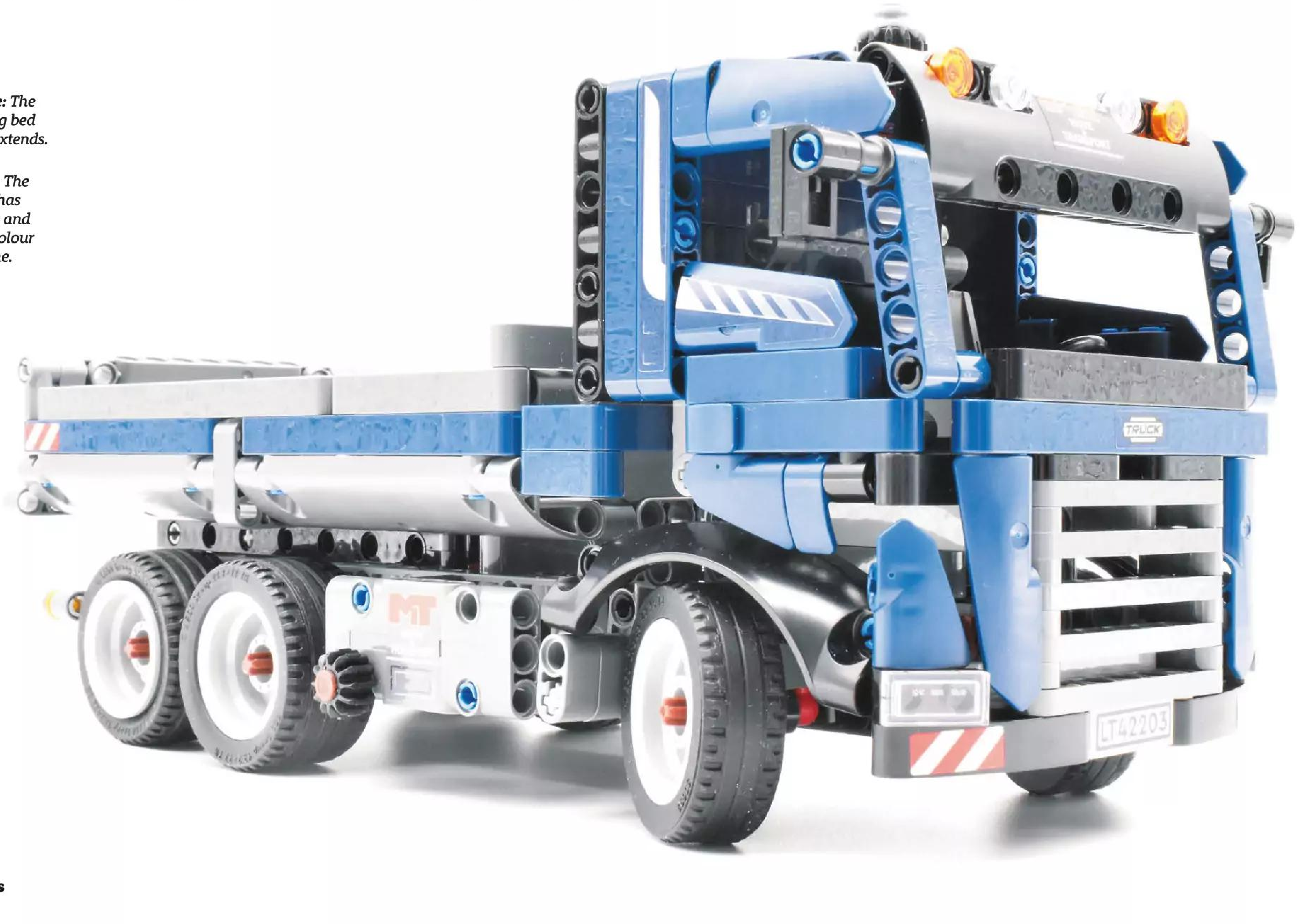
They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so it's ironic, really, that the truck's realism is what makes it at best normal, at worst mundane. It's also hard not to ignore the fact that the last Technic dump truck, 42147, had both similar features and an alternative build at just £8.99, a fifth of the price of 42203. The increased scale and size of 42203 are put to fairly good use throughout, but is it worth such a considerable price hike? Not really – bigger isn't always better.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict
59
Your love of dump trucks will determine how much you get out of this – for avid fans, there's something here, but it lacks the technical depth the theme demands.

Above: *The tipping bed fully extends.*

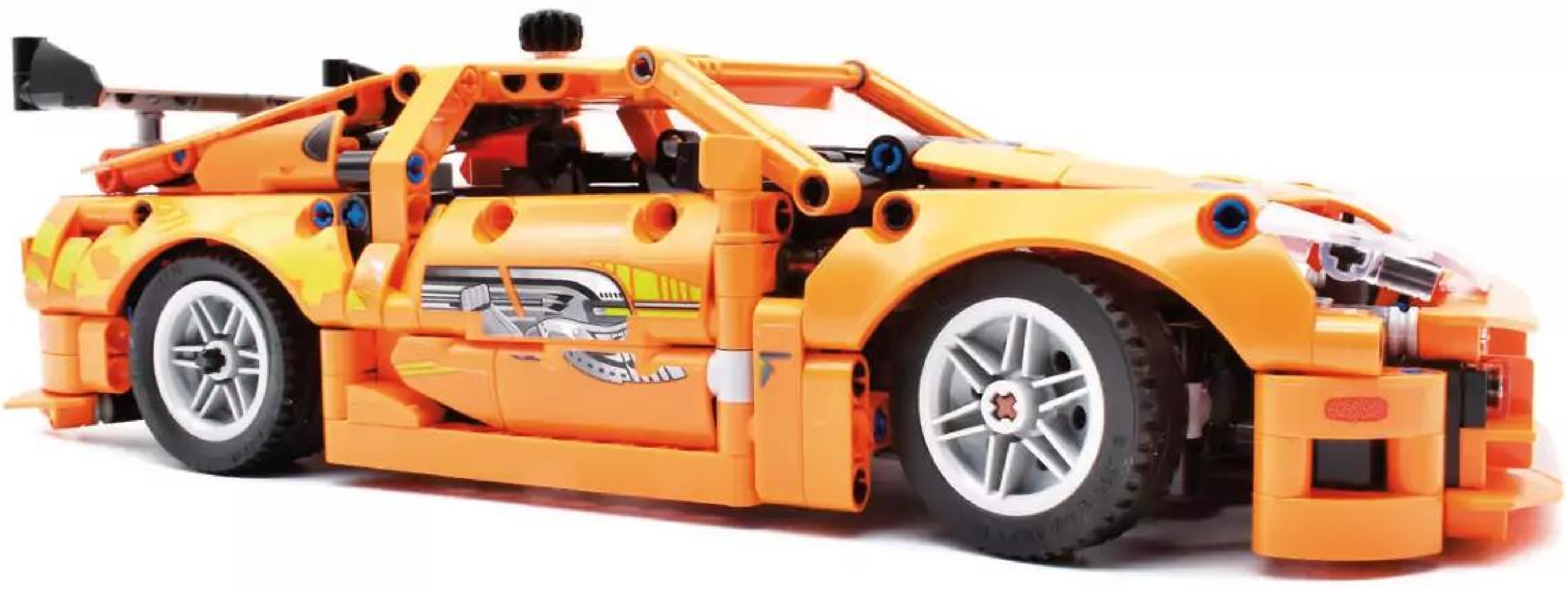
Right: *The truck has a blue and grey colour scheme.*



42204

Theme: *Technic /* ***Price:*** *£54.99, $59.99, €59.99 /*
Recommended age: *9+ /* ***Pieces:*** *810 /* ***Minifigures:*** *0*

Fast & Furious Toyota Supra Mk4



Since the release of 42111 Dom's Dodge Charger in 2020, there has been a steady trickle of LEGO models based on the Fast & Furious franchise, some of which are System sets and others that are Technic based. 42204 is the latest entry in the latter category, and goes back to the first film.

In The Fast and The Furious, Brian O'Connor needs a new ride after his previous one is destroyed. The Supra needs a bit of tender love and care, but when its rejuvenation is complete, it becomes a devilishly fast car, famously outperforming a Ferrari during a street race.

As with other Technic cars, 42204 is 15-wide. The building process is regular, starting with the chassis and then moving onto decoration. A six-cylinder inline front engine is built into the body, with a differential connecting it to the rear axles.

Aside from two printed mudguards, a hefty 43 stickers are used throughout the set, which become onerous to apply, causing a somewhat stunted build experience. An unfortunate design decision to split the door panelling design across three pieces also means those sticks look disjointed. Granted, stickers keep costs down, but they feel excessively used here – they are particularly egregious on the rear lights.

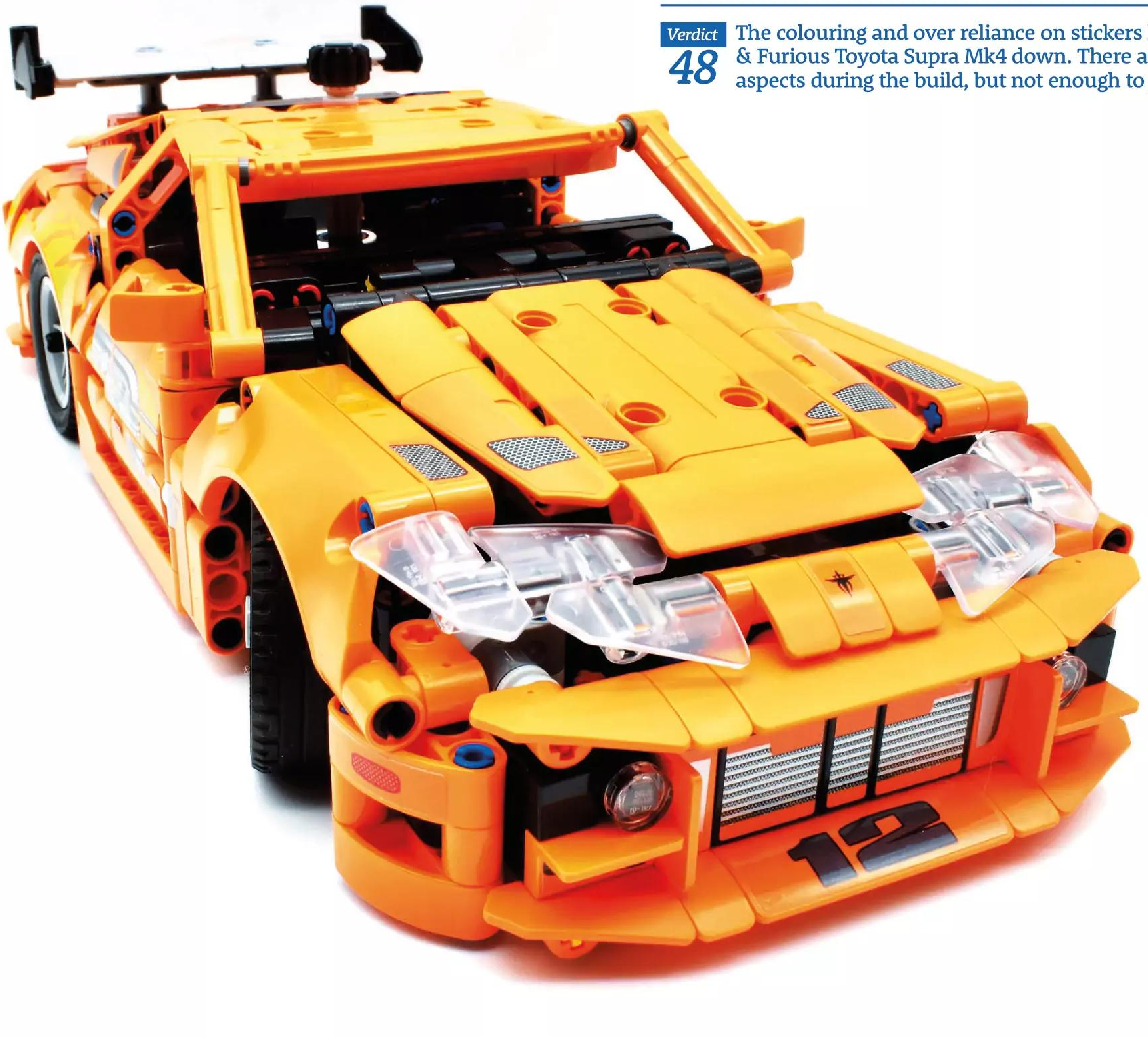
Otherwise, the build is enjoyable, and a few features are present, including the engine, which uses piston and crank discs that are connected to the rear wheels to move. The bonnet, doors and boot all open, the last of which reveals a somewhat lacklustre sound system. A small gear on the car's roof controls the steering and the roof panel can be removed in imitation of the targa top.

The first immediate observation about the completed model is its colour – in the film, the Supra is a pearl orange colour, but here bright orange pieces are used. It's an unforgiving disconnect. A few other niggles include gaps beneath the headlights and the bonnet. The fin pieces used throughout the set give some sense of angular design, but it lacks the source material's smooth, undisturbed sleekness.

42204 is a bit of a hard vehicle to love. Its colouring is off and some of the car's defining characteristics are absent. Granted the design team had a tough job, but this iconic screen vehicle is not delivered to the standard that fans desire. Hopefully it gets another edition before The Fast and the Furious turns 40.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict **48** The colouring and over reliance on stickers let 42204 Fast & Furious Toyota Supra Mk4 down. There are a few fun aspects during the build, but not enough to justify the price.



Above: *The set is build in bright orange.*

Left: *There are a significant number of stickers that add decoration.*

42206

Theme: *Technic* / ***Price:*** *£199.99, $229.99, €229.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *1,639* / ***Minifigures:*** *0*

Oracle Red Bull Racing RB20 F1 Car

The championship winning car driven by Max Verstappen and Sergio Pérez is given the Technic treatment in this intricate replica

In recent years, Red Bull Racing has been the dominant team in Formula One, winning the last four Drivers' Championships and two Constructors' Championships. Similar to the 42207 Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car, this 1:8 scale is ideal for capturing a good level of technical detail and also delivering a fantastic display piece. Unfortunately, it suffers from many of the same issues as other Technic F1 sets, but at least manages to sidestep a few of their shortcomings.

The completed RB20 is a very worthy replica of the actual car and from most angles, it's an excellent looking set. Its weaknesses are a symptom of the practicalities of the Technic system and aren't unique to the RB20; the Ferrari and Red Bull share the same suspension elements and springs. These create a good range of travel and pressing firmly on the car demonstrates this well.

While these pieces are ideally suited to road-going vehicles, they look incongruous with the ground-hugging nature of an F1 car. The car's profile highlights the very high clearance, more akin to demonstration events like Goodwood, where F1 cars run somewhere other than the racetrack. Admittedly, the springs will eventually sag over time and eventually look more realistic, but the visual effect they create when you finish building is disappointing.

Where the Red Bull does impress is the build process; this begins with the rear axle assembly. The new 7x8 wishbone elements look great in position and the new longer link modules connect the wheel hubs. The simple two-speed gearbox and V6 engine block are familiar but effective, while the MGU-H energy recovery system sits neatly on top of the engine and rotates in conjunction with it.

The front axle and the pull rod suspension are compact subassemblies that combine well with the steering rack in such a small space. A set of smaller cogs connects the steering via a universal joint and axles underneath the driver's seat to the hand of god mechanism. The area where the air intake encloses the hand of god steering and bodywork directly behind the driver is the first of several complex chassis sections using multiple plates and LEGO System parts.

Several areas of the car also employ some interesting use of parts to create some of the more complex areas of the RB20. The venturi inlets that flank either side of the car look realistic, using large helicopter blades inline to form their shape and an unusual connection offset underneath the vehicle to give them the correct inward pointing angle. The nose cone and front wing are also well-formed, although the large stickers must be neatly applied to ensure the logos are correctly aligned and that they don't lose their impact.

The rear wing is equally challenging to correctly sticker, but the result is worth the extra effort. The wing has two simple connection points that allow the upper blade to rotate, simulating the DRS effect, then the back of the car uses more System elements to complete the look.

Complex combinations of angled plates, blades and panels create the rest of the bodywork. The side pods are incredibly effective, connected at tricky angles to replicate the sloping shapes that lead toward the rear wheels. The engine cover is a particularly clever design, using a large blade to form the fin that uses two pins to hold it at just the correct angle to align with the larger panel elements on each side. The Halo system that protects the driver uses two long, flexible axles to create the curved shape that, although a little fiddly to align, looks quite realistic.

The twin curved sections linking the cover to the chassis are slightly less successful. These use multiple dark blue tube elements that might account for the increased part count compared to the Ferrari, but look somewhat out of place here. This is particularly noticeable when viewed from above; the cars aren't usually seen directly overhead, but many collectors mount them vertically on walls to save space. It's not unforgivable, but it's disappointing when the rest of the car is so well-formed. This is primarily a display set more than a complex technical challenge, so every minor visual quirk is magnified at this scale.

As with the Ferrari, the disproportionate sizes of the rear wheels are the main grievance, but the Red Bull also suffers from colour matching issues. The dark blue is attractive and a close-but-not-quite match for the actual livery; no quantity of stickers or clever bodywork will redress that.

The car looks great overall and makes for a nice display piece. Still, at this price point and in this range, it's not an unreasonable for fans to demand visual accuracy as well as technical complexity.

DAVE CARTLIDGE

Verdict
75
An attractive display set that authentically captures the overall shape and look of the actual vehicle, but falls a little short when it comes to the detail and colouration.

Claro
Mobil
PIRELLI

Left: The RB20 achieved nine GP victories in the 2024 season.

Below: Red Bull significantly altered the highly successful RB19 design, incorporating a complex cooling system.

42207

Theme: *Technic /* ***Price:*** *£199.99, $229.99, €229.99 /*
Recommended age: *18+ /* ***Pieces:*** *1,361 /* ***Minifigures:*** *0*

Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car

Is a gearbox, adjustable spoiler and removable engine cover enough to deliver the SF-24 at the standard that Technic fans demand?

Maranello-based Ferrari has the most prestigious and proud racing history of any Formula One team. Since the inaugural F1 championship in 1950 and every season since, the Prancing Horse has been synonymous with the sport and the LEGO Group has enjoyed a prosperous partnership with them for more than 25 years.

The 1:8 scale Technic Ferrari SF-24 follows the recent Speed Champions and City F1 sets to feature the famous brand. This isn't the first F1 car at this scale and given the incredible accuracy and detail that smaller Speed Champions builds have achieved, expectations are high.

The box art and instruction manual showcase the excellent appearance of the finished model, and the side-by-side comparison demonstrates the high level of detail the team has achieved. Technic builders will be pleased to see a range of new parts and elements included, although not all of these are as successful as they could have been — as the build demonstrates when it starts with the front axle and steering rack.

The complex push rod suspension uses fixed spring elements, mounted longitudinally, to provide enough travel to hold the car up without being bouncy; new wishbone elements are attached in pairs to hold the wheel hubs in place with a simple steering rack assembly behind them.

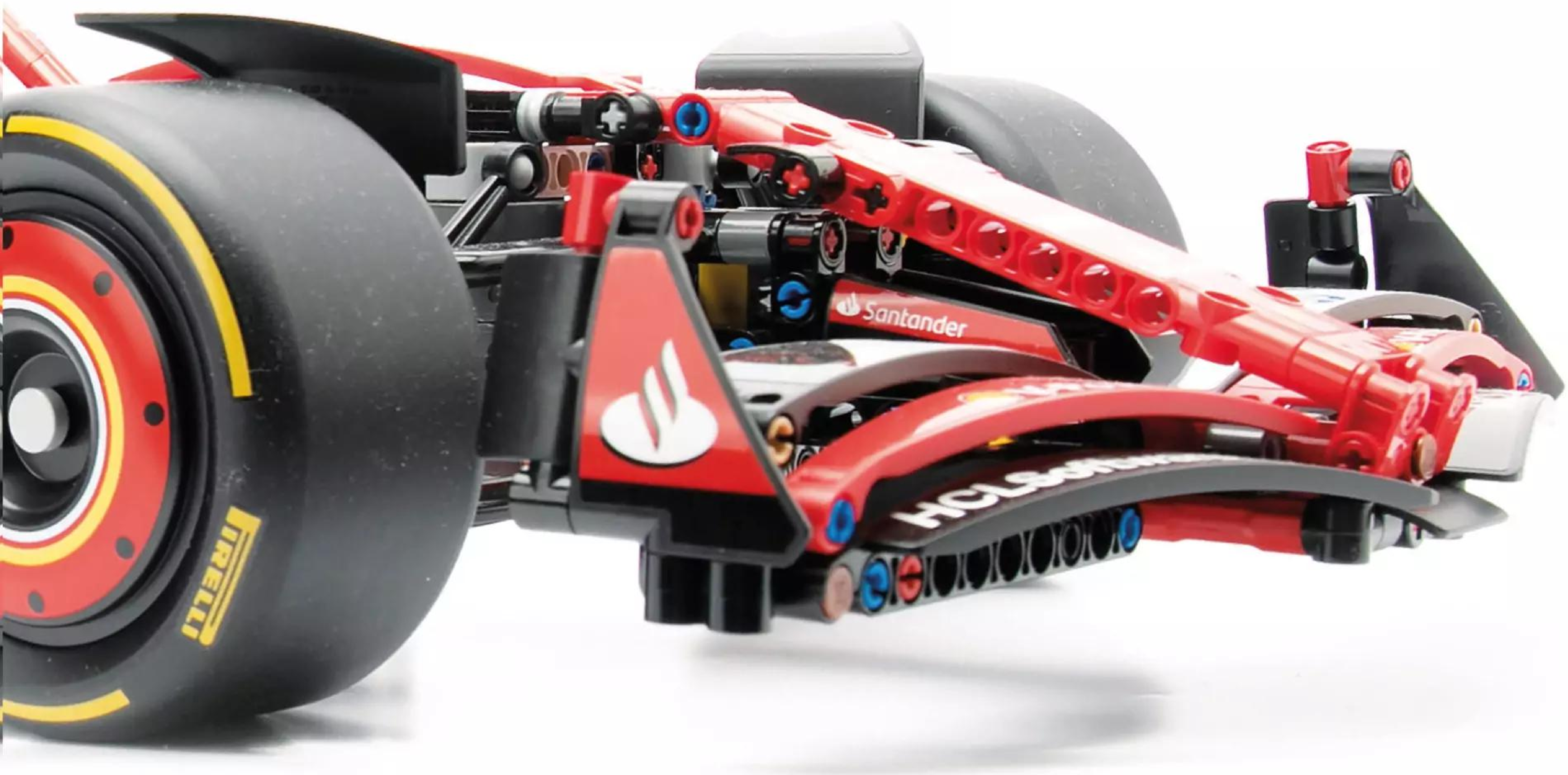
The perennial issue of mathematics and gear ratios that have annoyed Technic fans for seemingly forever is still unresolved here. For the vast majority of builders, the slight misalignment of the cog and the cross axle that attaches to the steering wheel will be unnoticeable; for those who crave technical perfection (and, truthfully, this isn't something that would happen on an actual vehicle) the fact that the steering wheel isn't perfectly vertical when the wheels are straight will – forgive the pun – grind their gears.

That said, the range of motion and the complex array of cogs connecting these components to the hand-of-God steering mechanic (cleverly disguised as the camera above the air intake above the driver's head) work well.

In contrast to the front axle, the rear section is less about cogs and more about pistons. The same wishbone elements and springs are used to hold the wheels in place with a great range of movement and shock absorption, but with pull-rod suspension connecting them. A compact differential sits between the wheels and connects to a similarly compact but simple two-speed gearbox. The actual car has eight forward gears, but an understandable compromise must be made to fit any functional gearing into the available space. However, the

Above: *The SF-24 was a serious contender for the constructor's title.*

Left: *For Miami, the car sported a special blue livery rather than the iconic red.*



mechanism is basic and a little underwhelming as a result.

Ahead of the gearbox you place the V6 engine that uses two new components – a new support element that removes any trace of its System origins in favour of Technic modules, and a new engine block element. The changes to this updated block are entirely cosmetic but more accurate – the familiar V6 shape and pistons slot neatly into place. A small rotating cylinder section above the engine represents the MGU-H energy reclamation unit and moves in line with the engine. It's a nice and technically accurate detail, although it looks a little exposed and fragile.

The chassis is robust and well-constructed, with a decent amount of technical detail, albeit mainly focused on the suspension and steering. The bodywork is much more accomplished, however. Dozens of red and black panels (and even more stickers) are connected at odd angles and orientations in a modular fashion before being bolted onto the chassis itself. The side pods are effective and good-looking, using various panels to create a convincing replica of the actual car, and the contrast between the red and black components is well balanced to be aesthetically pleasing while hiding the majority of the connection points.

The front of the car is a little less attractive, however. The wing is neatly created from overlapping curved plates for a pleasing look, but when connected to the nose cone, the visible connectors and axle end plates are unsightly, which is problematic as it is such a focal point of the car.

The nose looks curved even though it's not and the sponsor decals lend authenticity. The new wheel moulds are nicely printed and look completely authentic, with the superb printed wheel covers bringing the car to life. Unfortunately, these new wheels only come in one size. Given the negative response to previous F1 sets having incorrectly identical wheels (something that has been rectified in Speed Champions), it feels like a glaring error that the rear tyres on the Technic range aren't wider than the front.

This might be an acceptable mistake to some, but this is a lesson that the LEGO Group has already learned. A backwards step like this in a flagship set is unlikely to appease fans, even if the finished car looks impressive.

DAVE CARTLIDGE

Verdict
73
A reasonably enjoyable build results in a great-looking model that just about overcomes a lack of deep functionality and several visual inaccuracies.

90-100	*An exceptional set that does something special, original or innovative.*
80-90	*A top tier LEGO set that is close to perfect, showing what the System can do.*
70-80	*Strongly recommended, a very good LEGO set providing a really enjoyable build.*
60-70	*A decent set that will offer a satisfying experience, but may have a few flaws.*
50-60	*Still recommended by Blocks, but expect an average and pedestrian build.*
40-50	*Perhaps worth buying, but a set that falls below the usual high LEGO standards.*
25-40	*A disappointing set that might have some redeeming qualities.*
1-25	*A set that's only for the dedicated collectors; there are many better options.*

REVIEWED **THIS MONTH**

SET	THEME	SCORE
75409 Jango Fett's Starship	Star Wars	89
75400 Plo Koon's Jedi Starfighter Microfighter	Star Wars	59
75411 Darth Maul Mech	Star Wars	40
75399 Rebel U-wing Starfighter	Star Wars	71
72033 Donkey Kong & DK Jumbo	Super Mario	71
72034 Baby Mario vs. Baby Luigi	Super Mario	64
72036 Mario Kart – Baby Peach & Grand Prix	Super Mario	72
77055 Able Sisters Clothing Shop	Animal Crossing	55
43266 Cinderella's Dress	Disney	52
43262 Maleficent's & Cruella De Vil's Dresses	Disney	63
10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire	Icons	83
76441 Hogwarts Castle: Dueling Club	Harry Potter	62
76442 Hogwarts Castle: Charms Class	Harry Potter	38
76447 Hogwarts Castle: Flying Lessons	Harry Potter	58
76443 Harry & Hagrid's Motorcycle Ride	Harry Potter	32
76453 Malfoy Manor	Harry Potter	78
42203 Tipping Dump Truck	Technic	59
42204 Fast & Furious Toyota Supra Mk4	Technic	48
42206 Oracle Red Bull Racing RB20 F1 Car	Technic	75
42207 Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car	Technic	73

Buy these sets
blocksmag.com/goto/lego

NEXT MONTH

What's the buzz around LEGO Friends 42669 Beekeepers' House and Flower Garden? Is it as sweet as honey?

AT BLOCKSMAG.COM

Despite being packed with Clone Cadets, does 40765 Kamino Training Facility offer a fresh and original build experience?

SUBSCRIBE TO

Blocks

LEGO
JANGO FETT'S STARSHIP
STAR WARS
ULTIMATE COLLECTOR SERIES
STAR WARS
LEGO
Disney
18+ | 75409 | 2970 pcs
STAR WARS
Jango Fett's Starship
Manufacturer: Kuat Drive Yards
Model: Firespray-31-class patrol and attack craft
Length: 21.5 m
Engines: F-31 drive engines
Hyperdrive: Modified class 1.0
Max Acceleration: 2,700 G
Weapons: Twin blaster cannons, Rapid-firing laser cannons, Concussion missile launcher, Minelayer, Void-7 seismic charges
Capacity: 1 pilot, 1 copilot, 6 prisoners, 3 passengers, 40 metric tons cargo

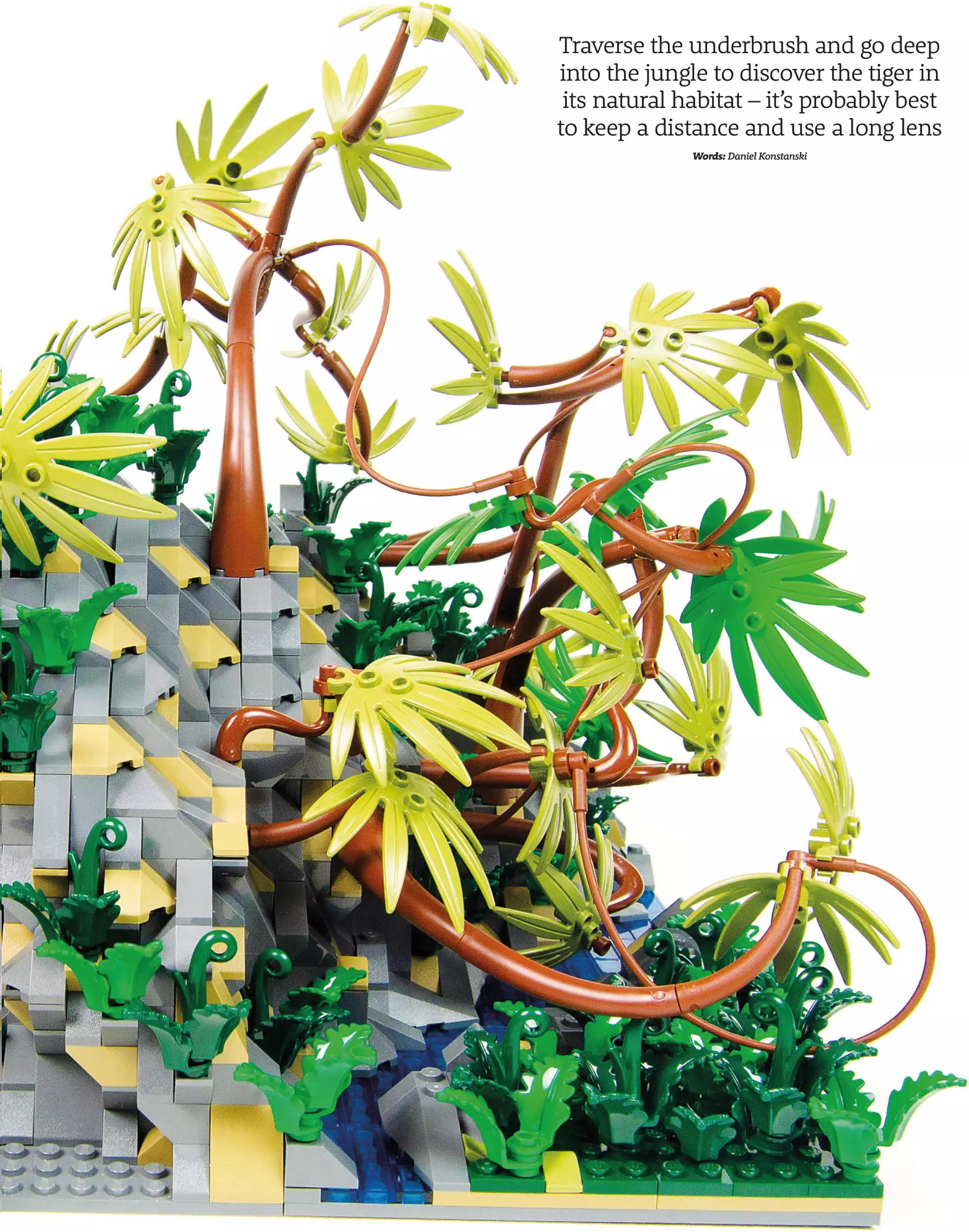
TO WIN THE NEW JANGO FETT'S STARSHIP

Subscribe to Blocks magazine today to be in with a chance of winning
ULTIMATE COLLECTOR SERIES 75409 JANGO FETT'S STARSHIP
One lucky subscriber will be drawn at random to win the set.

Everyone who subscribes to Blocks by **July 3, 2025** will gain entry into the next and all subsequent **monthly** draws. Existing subscribers will also be automatically entered into every draw. Good luck!

This competition is open to anyone who subscribes to a Blocks Magazine subscription, except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the Promotion. Each participant can only enter once during the Promotion Period. The competition will be open from 9.00am (BST) on June 5, 2025 to 5:00pm July 3, 2025 (the "Promotion Period"). Any entries outside of the Promotion Period will not be counted. One overall competition winner will be chosen by the Publisher of Blocks Magazine. The decision of the Promoter in relation to the Promotion is final. No correspondence will be entered into. No information regarding entries or judging will be disclosed to any third party not involved in the conduct of the Promotion. The prize is not transferable, re-saleable or exchangeable. There is no cash alternative. The promoter reserves the right to substitute any of the prize products subject to availability. Winners will be announced in a future issue of Blocks magazine and on our social media pages. Winners must respond to notification of their prize within 48 hours otherwise the right to claim the prize will be lost and the promoter reserves the right to re-award the prize(s). No entries from agents, third parties, organised groups or applications automatically generated by computers will be accepted. No incomplete or corrupted entries will be accepted. Any entries not in accordance with the entry instructions will be rejected. Any entries containing offensive or inappropriate content will be removed. By entering participants will be deemed to have accepted and be bound by the rules. All entry instructions form part of these Terms and Conditions. In the event of unforeseen circumstances the Promoters reserve the right to offer alternative prizes of equal or greater value. The Promoter reserves the right to amend, alter or terminate this promotion at any time due to circumstances beyond its control. The Promoter's decision is final and binding in all matters relating to the promotion. The Promoter can accept no responsibility for, and reserves the right to refuse, entries which are corrupt, incomplete or fail to arrive by the closing date. These rules are governed by English law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts. Promoter & Data Controller: Silverback Publishing Ltd

DEEPER JUNGLE



Traverse the underbrush and go deep into the jungle to discover the tiger in its natural habitat – it's probably best to keep a distance and use a long lens

Words: *Daniel Konstanski*

Johnny Thunder is a LEGO legend. Introduced as the main character in Adventurers all the way back in 1998, this globetrotting hero has dealt with ancient curses, sinister barons and even dinosaurs. Ever since that debut, he has popped up in other LEGO media, even making a cinematic appearance in The LEGO Movie.

The character is back in the recent City sets that focus on wildlife, perhaps channelling 1990s icon Steve Irwin the Crocodile Hunter (with who he shares a love of khaki shirts). The subtheme features a variety of exotic creatures, including a tiger in 60426 Jungle Explorer Off-Road Truck. Photography is a key part of these new sets, just as it was in Adventurers with the inclusion of old school cameras. Here, a drone does the heavy lifting so the humans can keep a safe distance.

As is typical for sets designed to appeal to imaginative children, the boxes tend to focus on vehicles and fauna, with fewer elements used for flora and broader environments. That presents a creative opportunity to place these creatures in a larger, more interesting natural environment. This build provides a lush jungle environment with lots of options for places to take pictures of the exciting animals as well as space to do a little veterinary work along the way.

60426 Jungle Explorer Off-Road Truck includes a small cave from which the tiger can emerge from a sleep, perhaps to chase off unwanted visitors. This provides inspiration for this build, which maintains the cave as the central feature

Caves are often built into hills, which naturally suggest that this construct should rise from a low to high elevation above the opening. Depicting rock in a way that looks realistic and random can be challenging with LEGO elements. Stacks of bricks tend to look wrong, as they do not twist and turn in the way actual rock, worn away by water over eons, does. A key aspect of this build is the natural looking rock that encloses the cave and forms the hill into which it disappears. To that end, no studs are exposed in the rock areas.

The tiger's home is supposed to be an area where humans do not normally visit, so everything should look natural and overgrown. Lots of vegetation elements such as ferns, leaves and brown tree elements cover the environment. This makes the entire setting a tangled web with branches and leaves at all angles, just like a real jungle. Thanks to the pin and bar connections that many modern plant pieces feature, this is possible in a way that would not have been a decade ago.

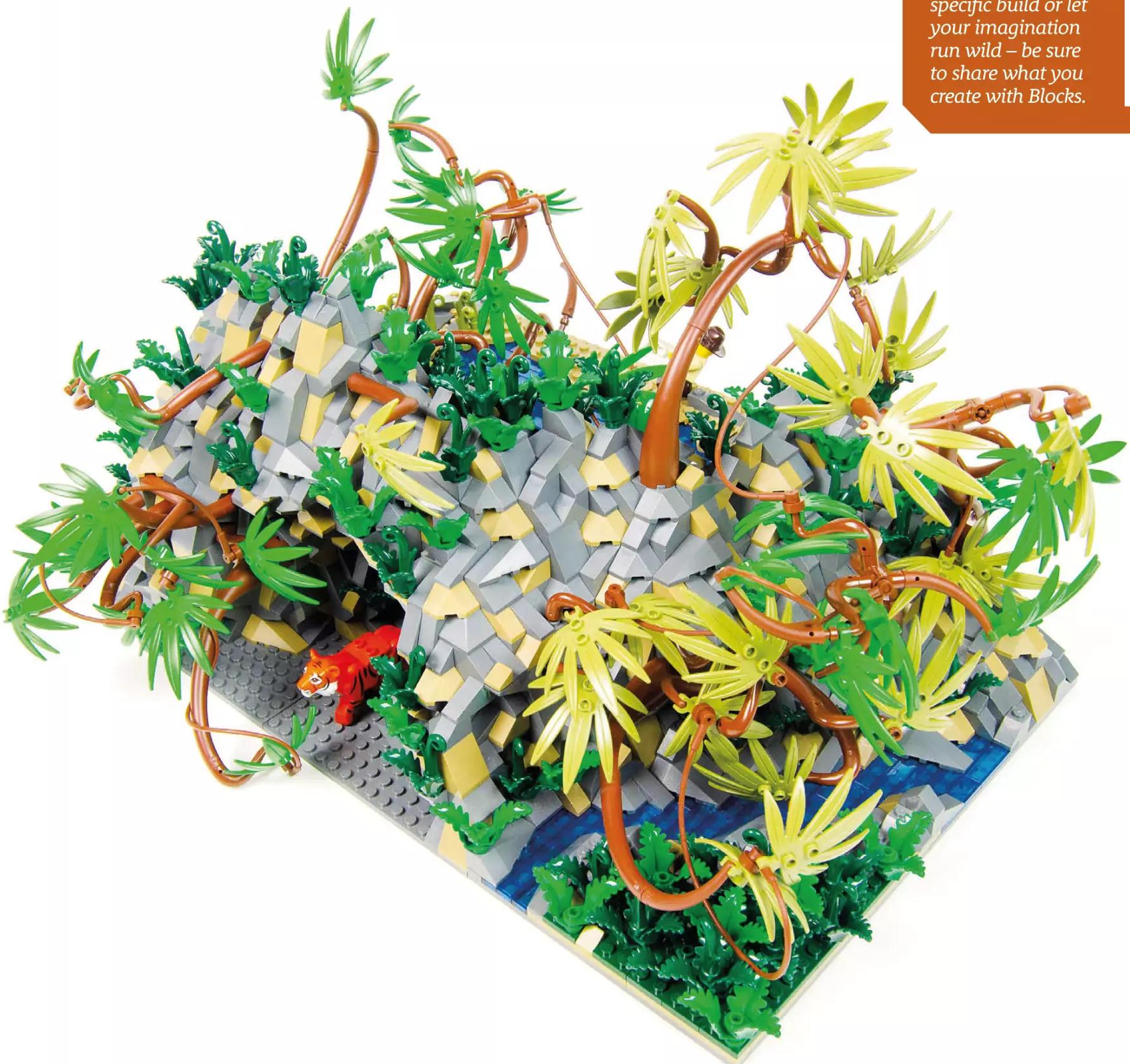
A mess of foliage, however, can be boring. Accordingly, other features add to the environment. Jungles are known for being very wet, so a small pond and river are part of the scene. The colours also need to be right. Ultimately, dark grey, dark tan and various shades of green contrast with dark, transparent blue for the water. Everything comes together in a build that looks different from almost every angle.

BEFORE

This project was created with support from LEGO Pick a Brick

Visit LEGO.com's Pick a Brick service to buy loose elements in whatever quantities you need. This project uses pieces provided by LEGO Pick a Brick, demonstrating what you can do when you take a LEGO set and add more bricks! Take inspiration from this specific build or let your imagination run wild – be sure to share what you create with Blocks.

> "Everything comes together in a build that looks different from almost every angle."



AFTER

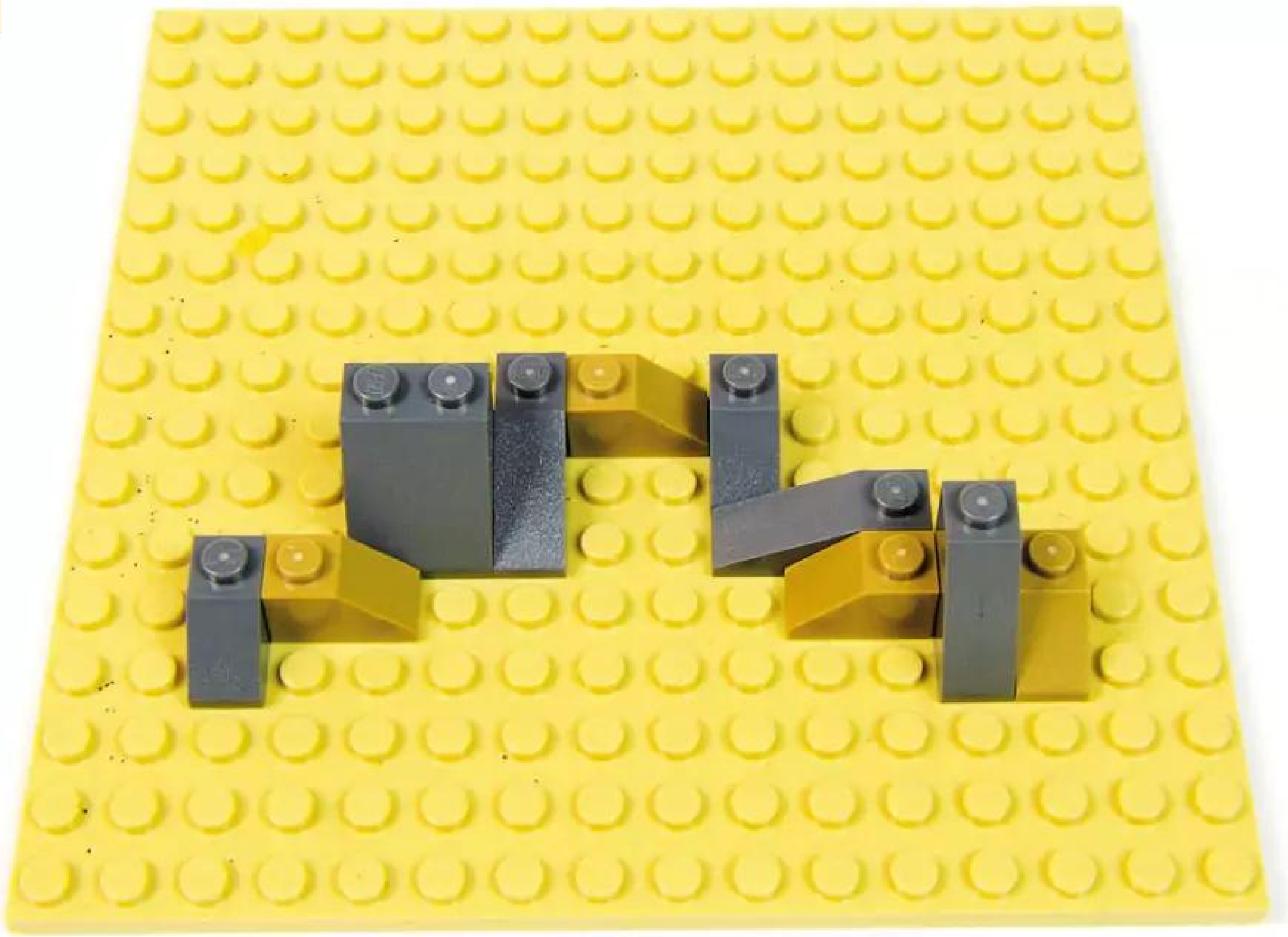
CAVE

This build's central feature is the cave. It is the focal point that draws the eye – the rest of the build is constructed around and above it. Caves such as this can be tricky to build because they need to start from deep inside the model and rise both upward and outward while needing to look like natural rock from both above and below. The key to achieving this shape is placing inverted slopes atop standard slopes.

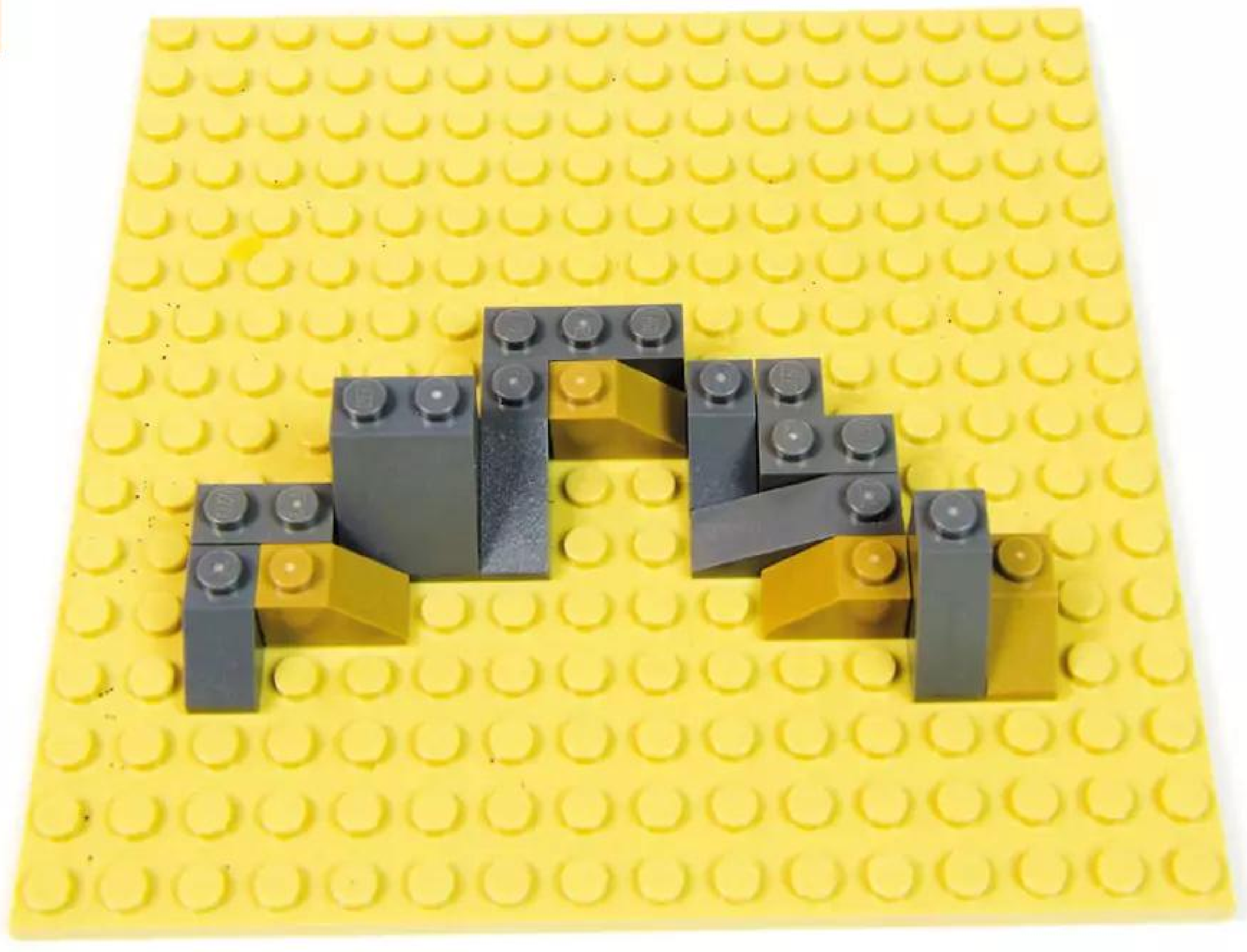
Lay out the general shape of the cave's footprint first with the lowest level of elements. These should all be regular slopes. Define the front wall of the cave and then carve out a shape into what will become the hill. From there, begin building up with a mix of regular and inverted slopes until the desired roof height at is achieved. From there, use various shapes and sizes of inverted slopes to start connecting and enclosing the roof along the way. This will naturally seal off the space while making a very interesting shape across the top.

It is essential to support all of these slopes or the whole construct will be extremely fragile. As you build the cave up, fill in gaps with other bricks. These will allow for the eventual top layer to be nice and solid. Be sure to use matching colours among the slopes at the front so that no stray colour shows through unintentionally, but behind that front section elements can be used in any colour to add strength.

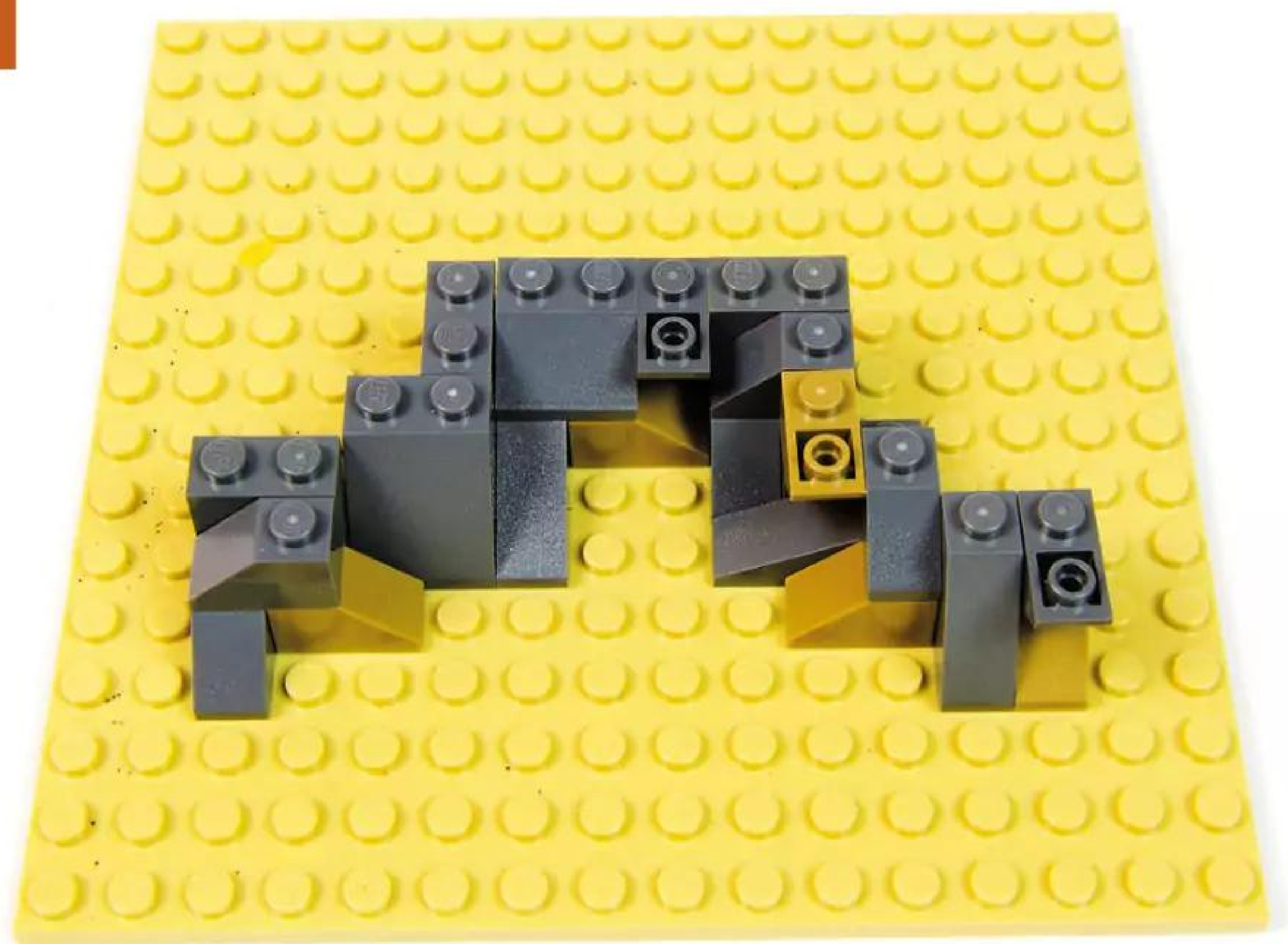
1



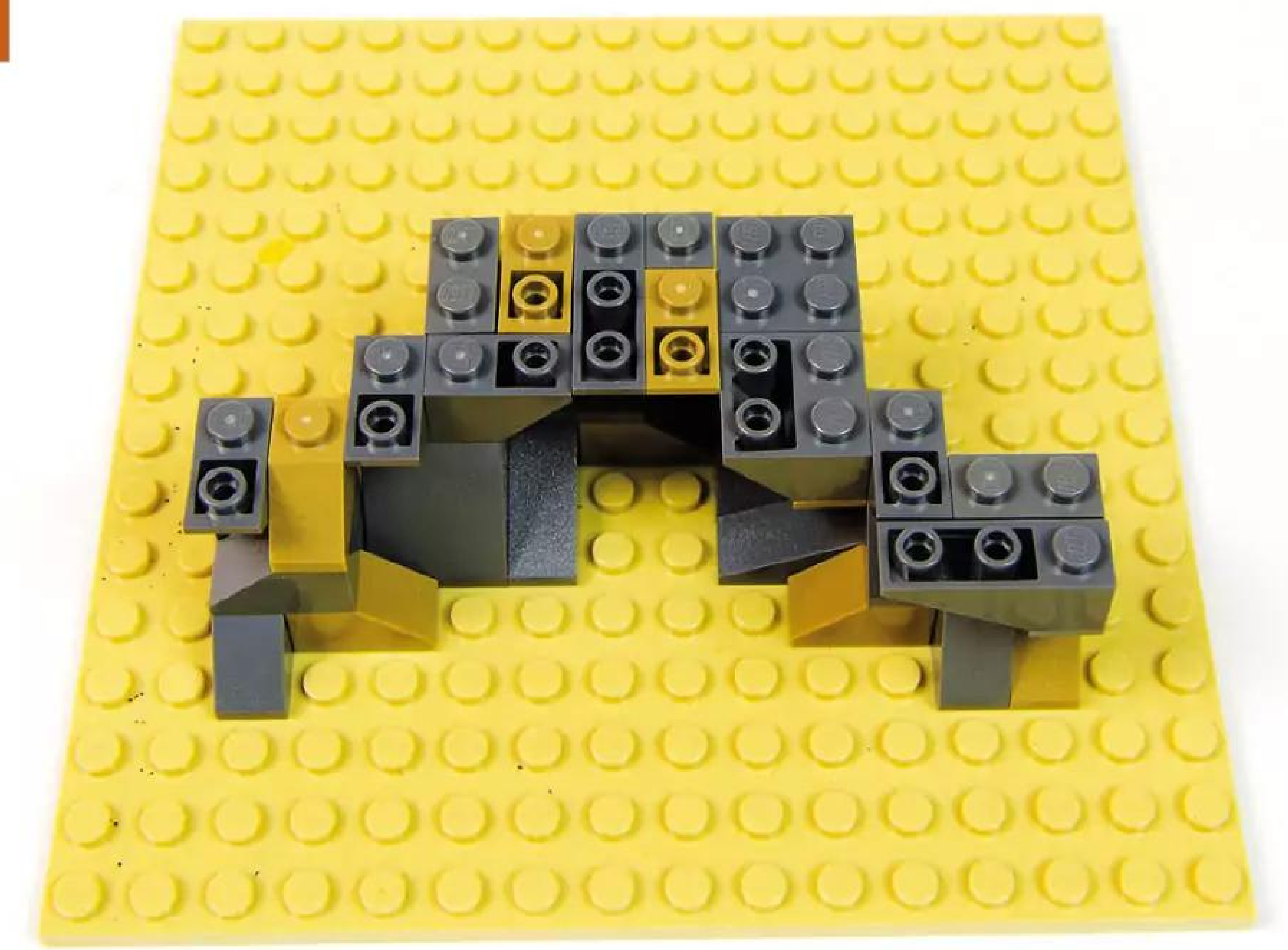
2



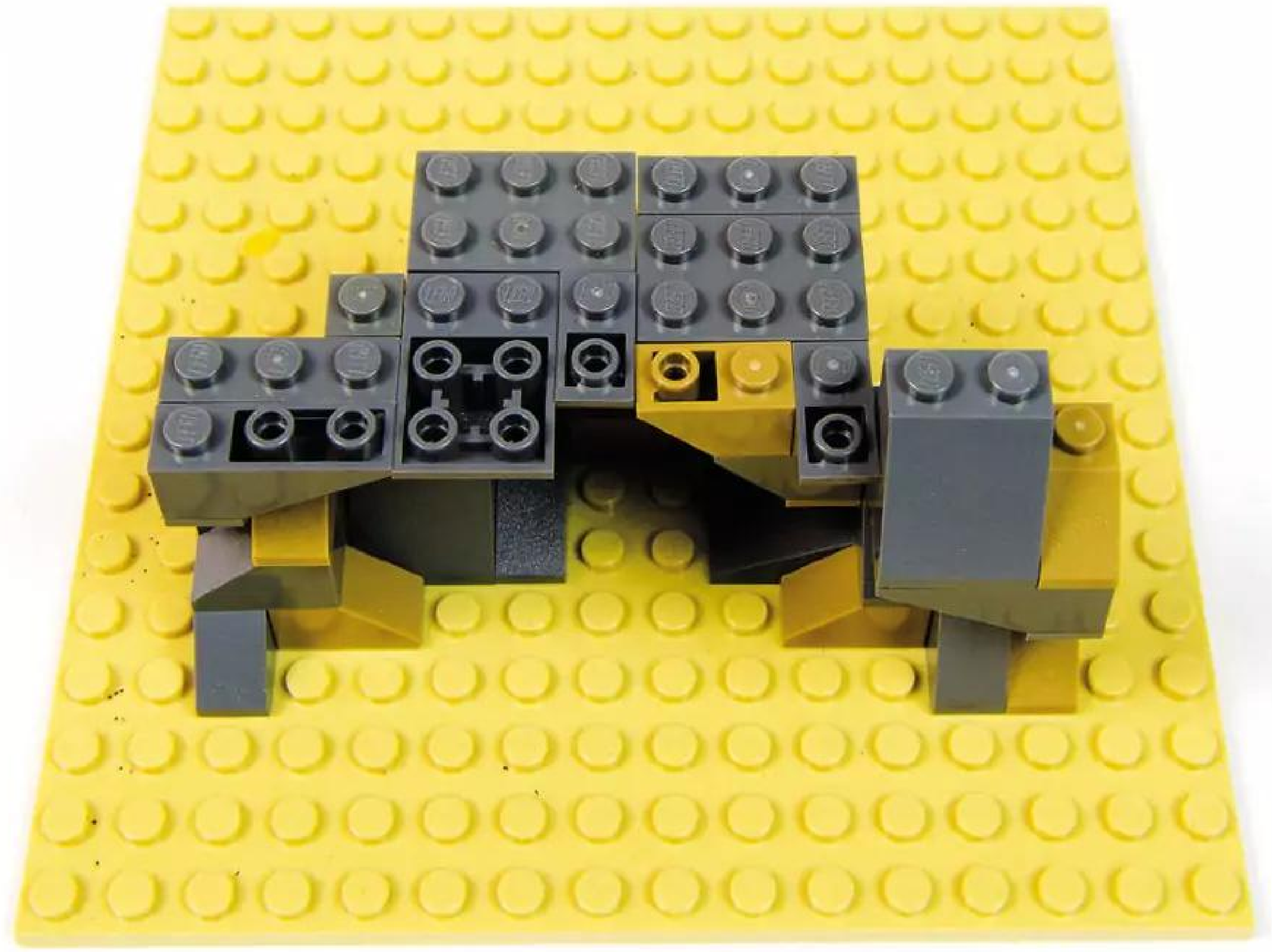
3



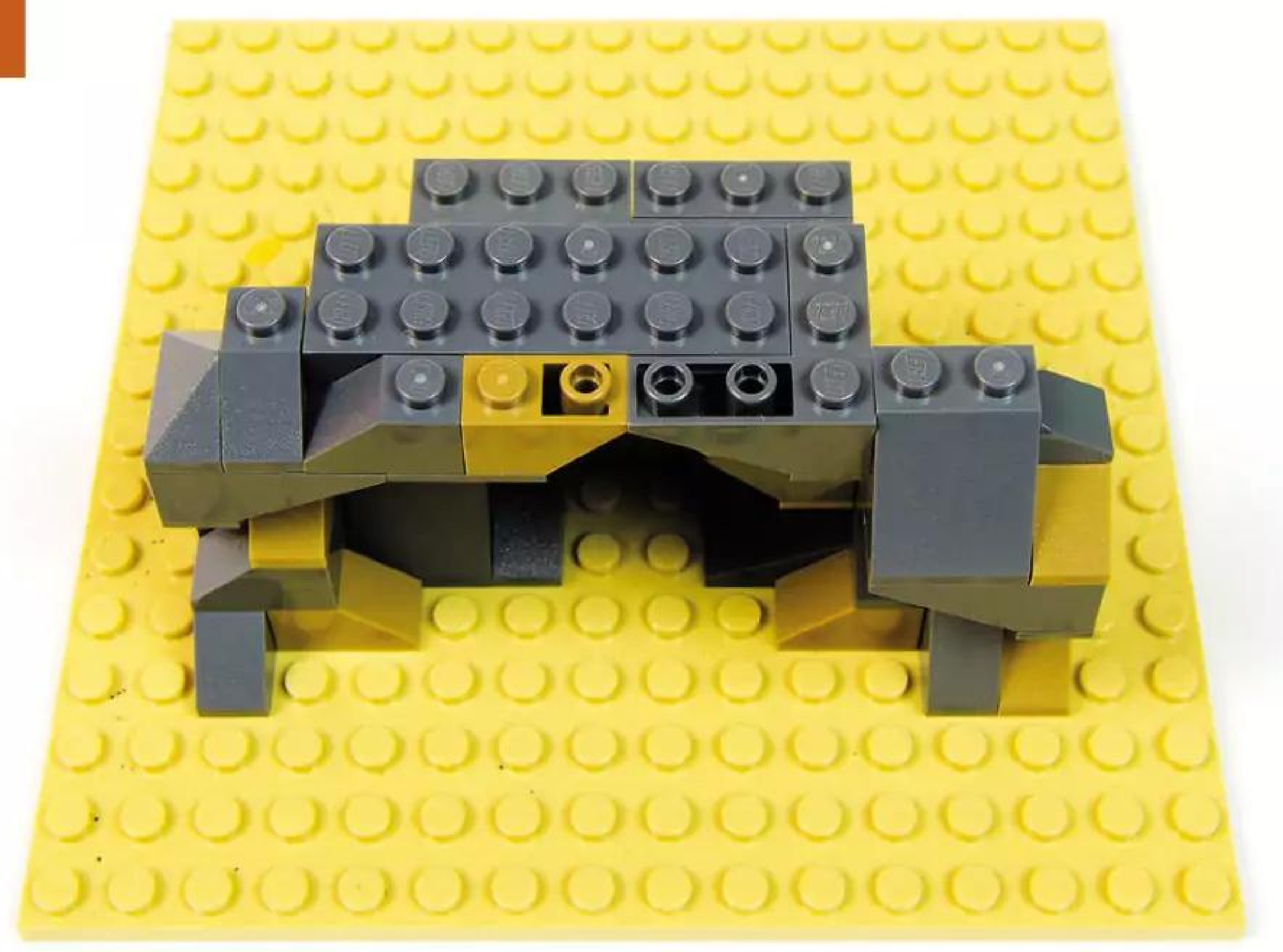
4



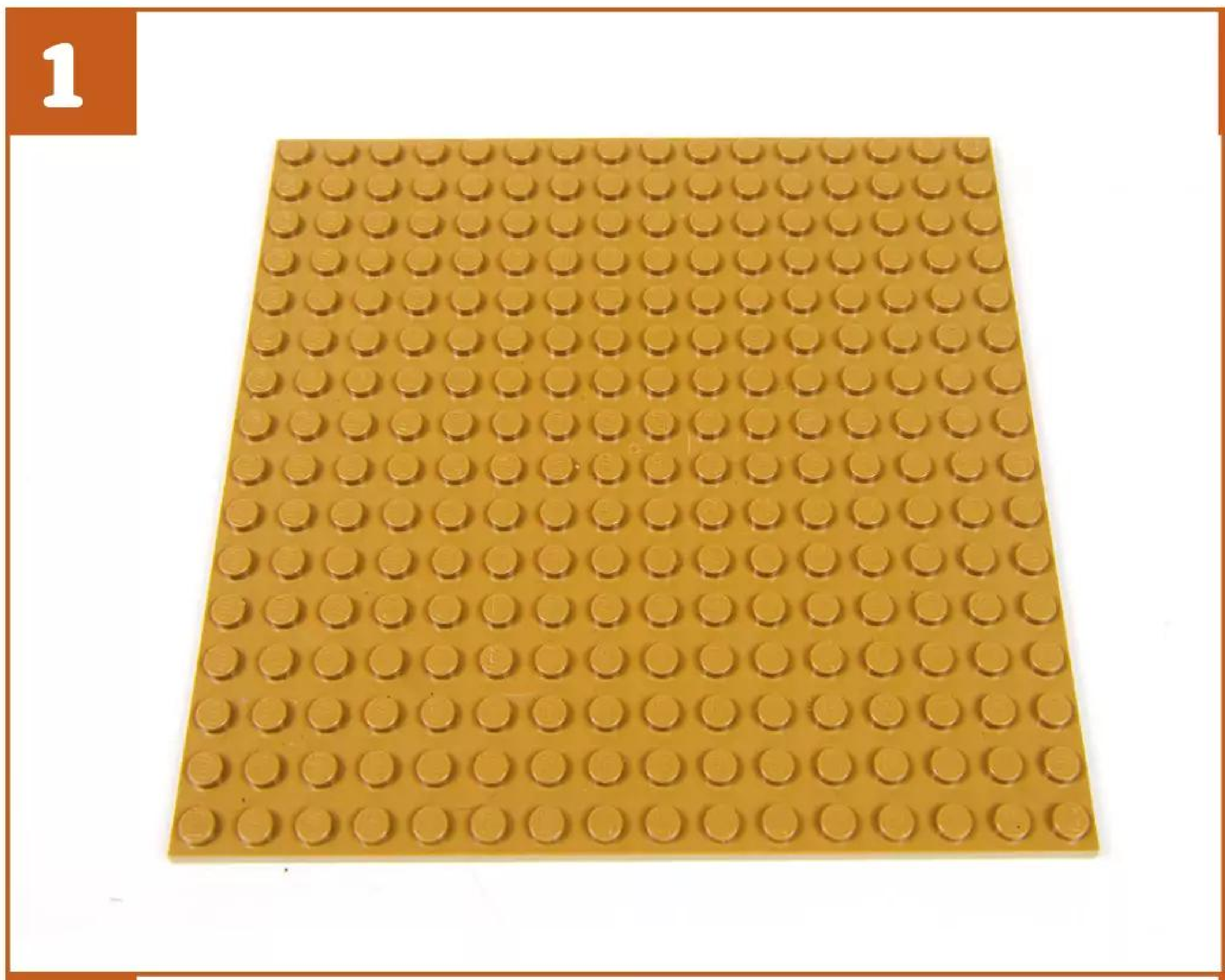
5



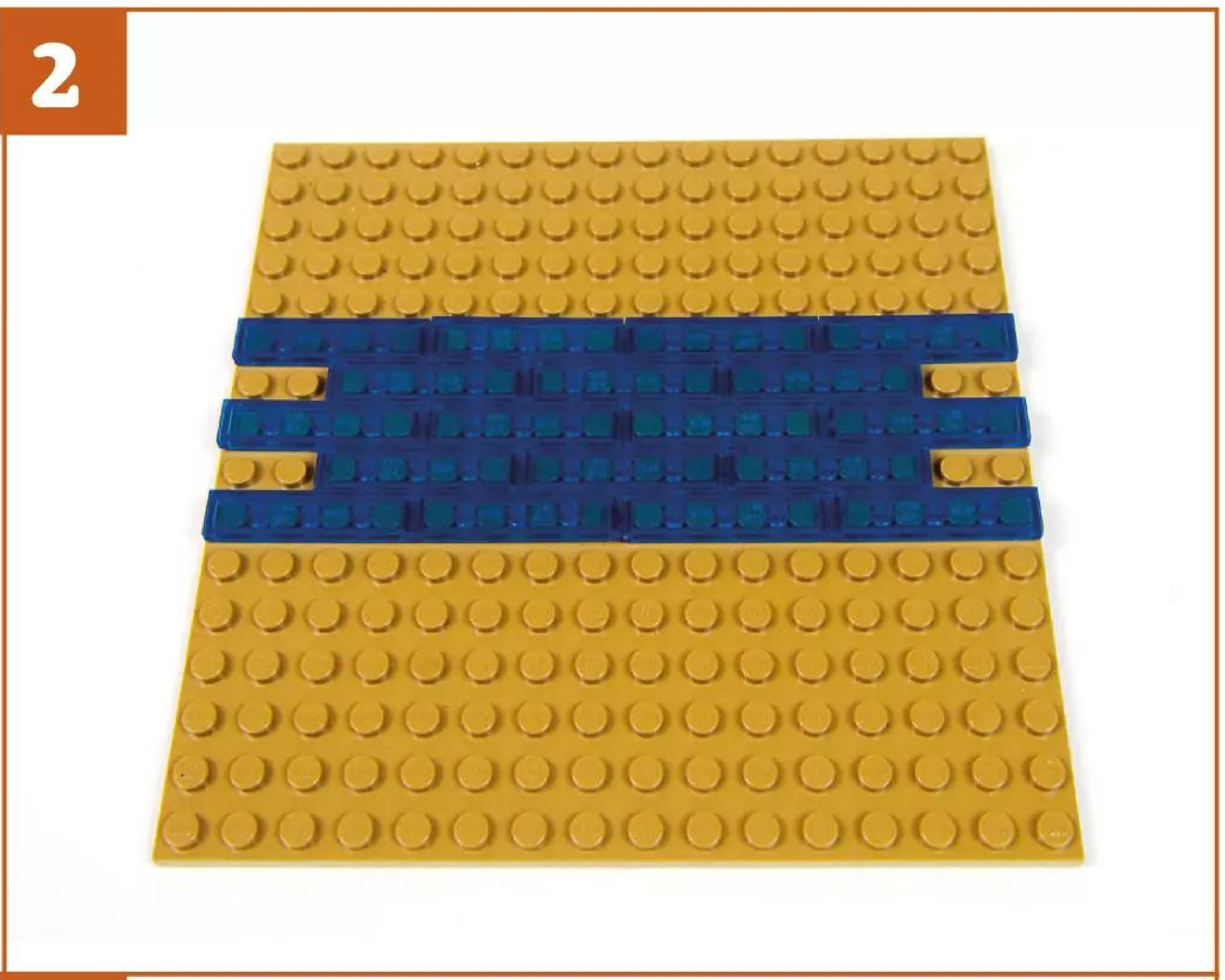
6



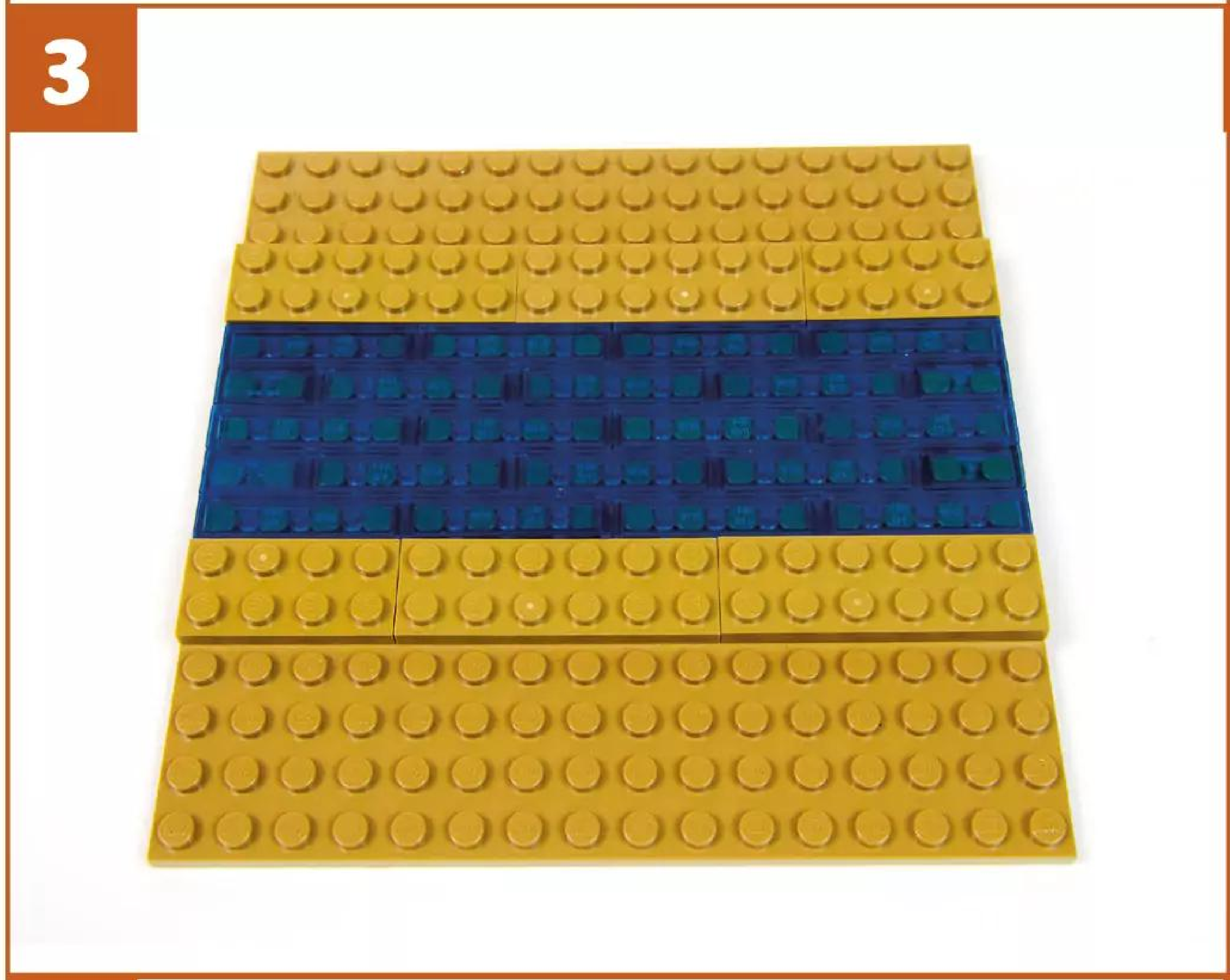
1



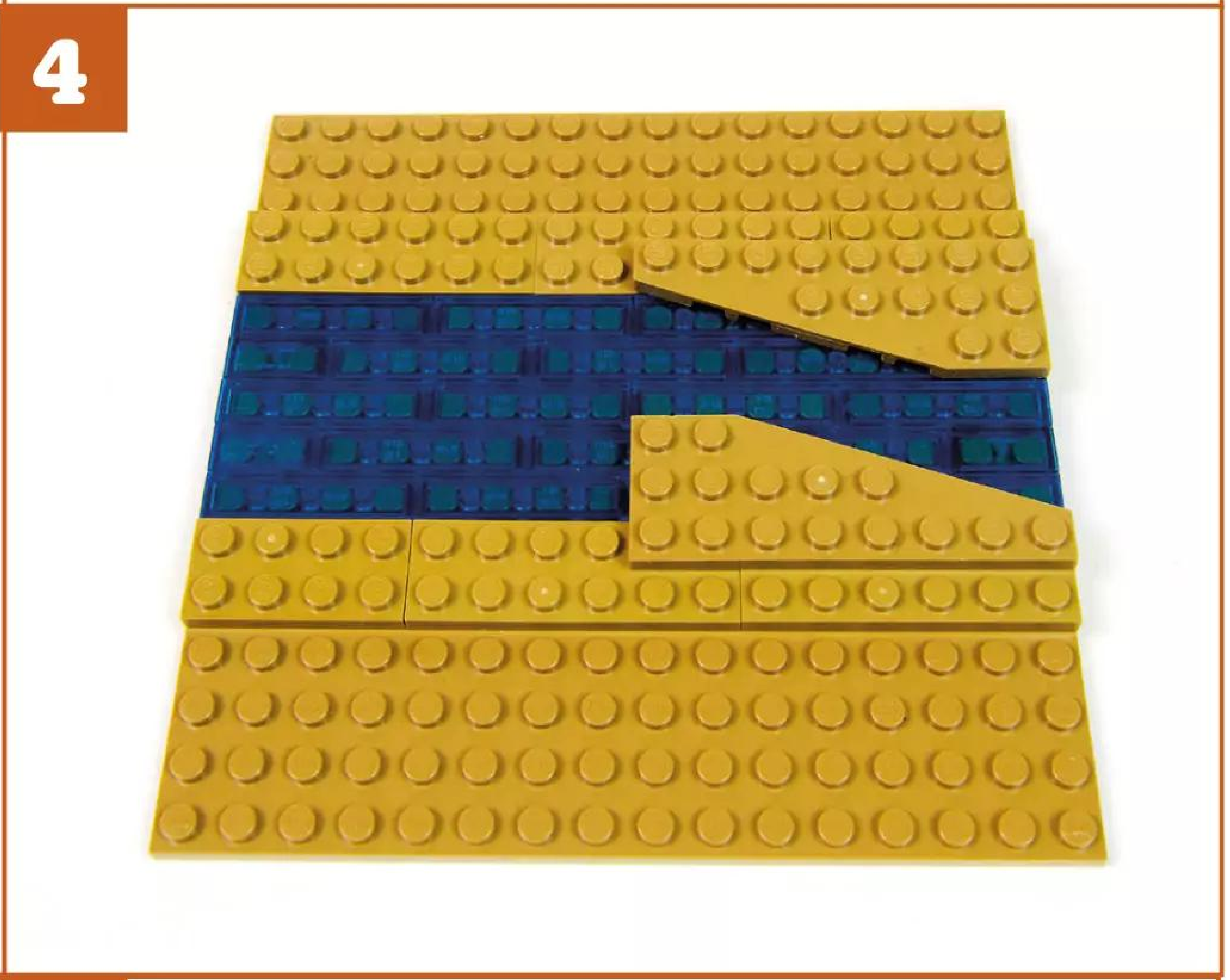
2



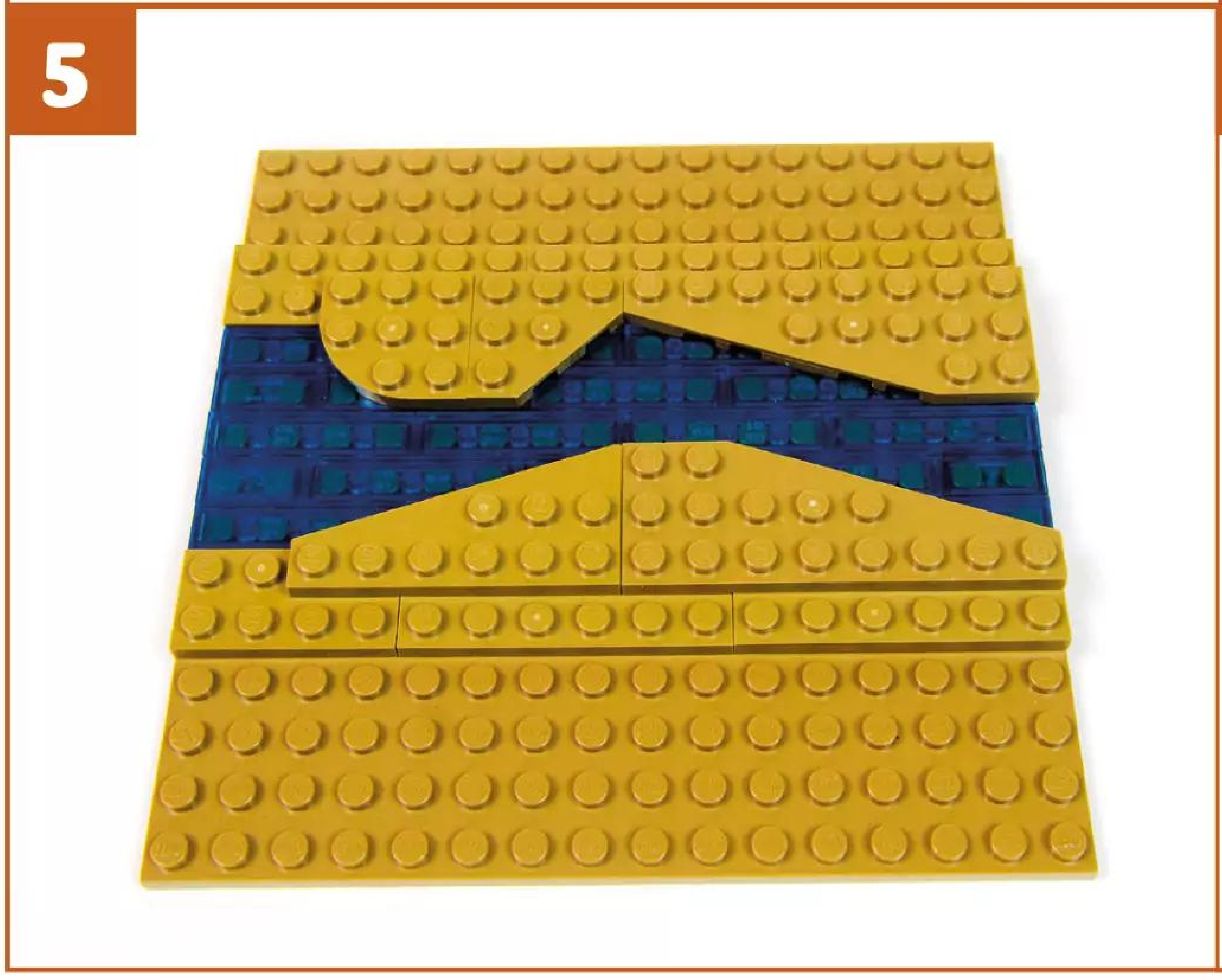
3



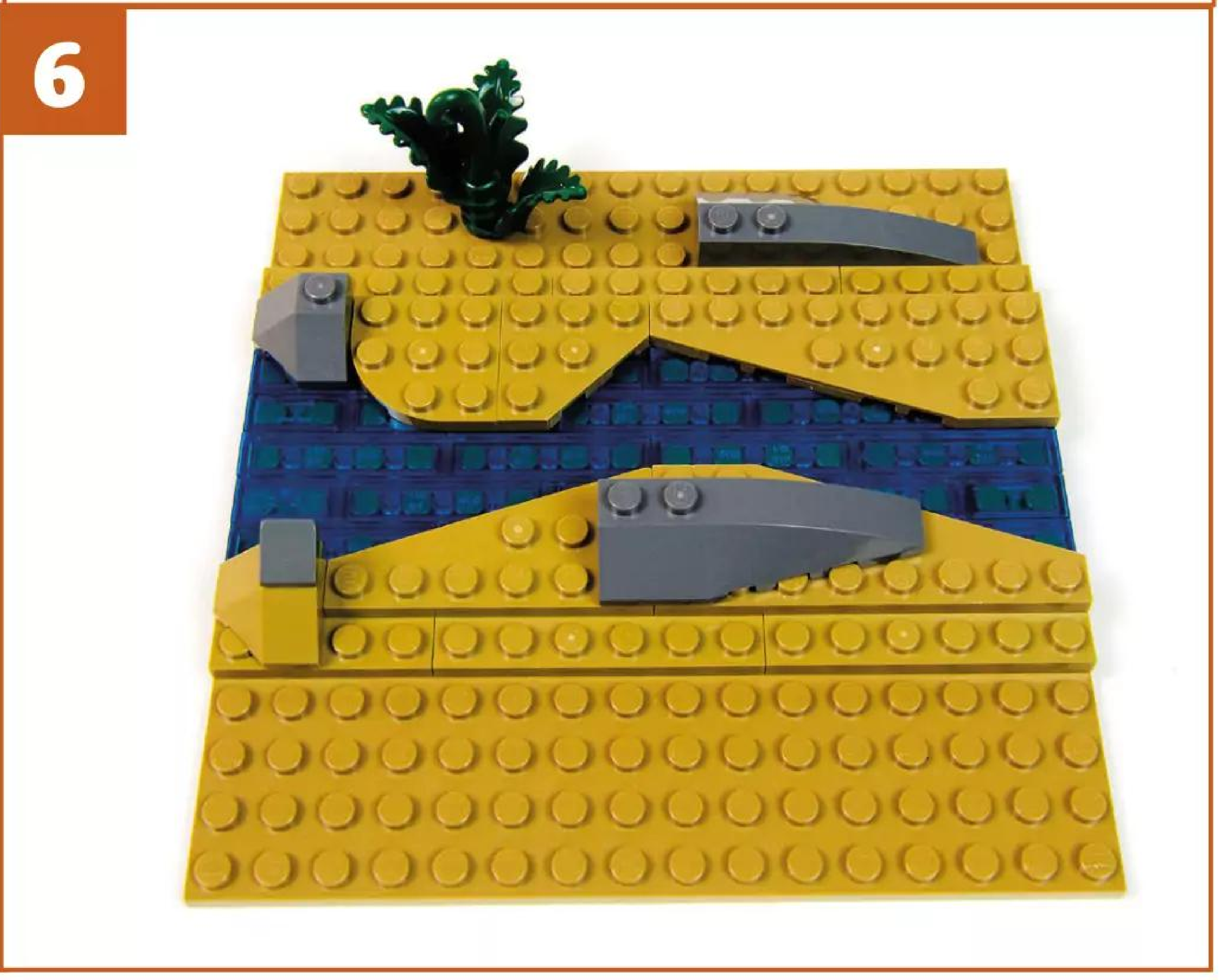
4



5



6



RIVER

LEGO NINJAGO, specifically the series of modular sets, has demonstrated how transparent blue tiles with parts layered on top of them can create unique looking shorelines with a variety of shapes. Such a technique is perfect for a build like this, which includes both a stream and small pond.

Begin by laying out the general shape of the water body using transparent tiles. Be sure to offset each piece so that all of the seams don't line up, as that will look unnatural. Once you have placed the tiles, fill in all of the edges with plates so that there are points of attachment for the next layer. This edge can then be filled with a variety of wedge and curved plates to create a riverbank.

This same technique can be used for laying out shorelines around larger bodies of water. Space did not allow for it in this build, but a third layer below the tiles adds more depth. Mixing different shades of greens, blacks and blues gives the illusion of an underwater area.

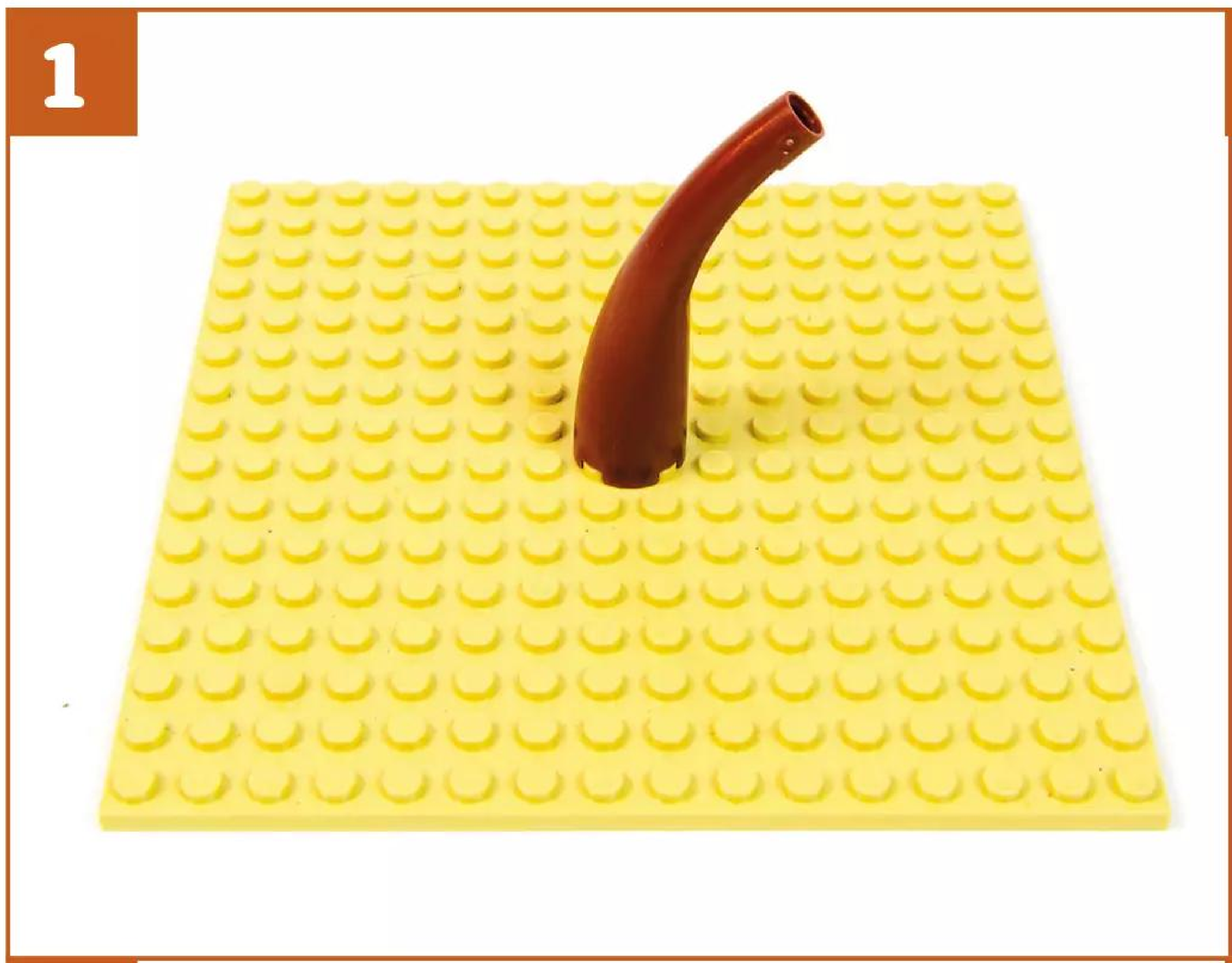
CANOPY TREE

Jungles have different levels of canopy where various species thrive. The tallest of these poke up to the highest places and defines the upper most layer of the canopy. Jungle trees often contort themselves and their branches into wild shapes to chase small holes amongst other trees through which precious sunlight shines. By taking branch elements and rotating them at various angles, you can create this same effect.

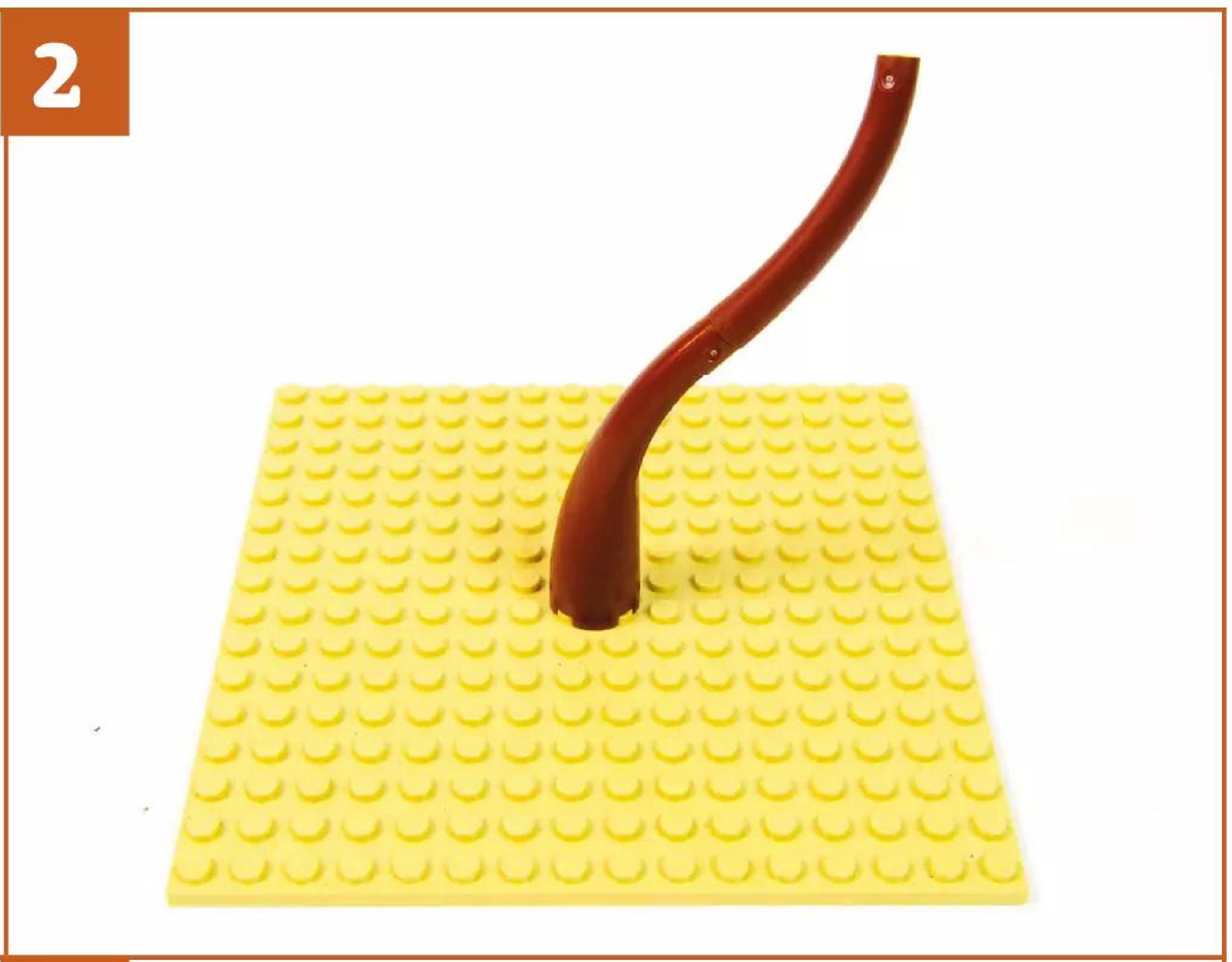
Insert a 3L or 4L bar element at the top of the trunk. Around this bar, you can place connectors to which you can then attach branch elements. This format allows for every branch to jut out at a different angle. Mixing and matching branch elements, large curves and more subtle curves further enhances the natural, chaotic look. At the end of each branch you can place a leaf element. Certain branch components can also facilitate leaf attachments along the way.

The key is to make these trees tall. Their trunks should be long and spindly, rising high above the jungle floor. Amongst them you can also insert vines using flexible hose elements. These can provide another great visual as they can contort into shapes that can't be achieved by any other LEGO element.

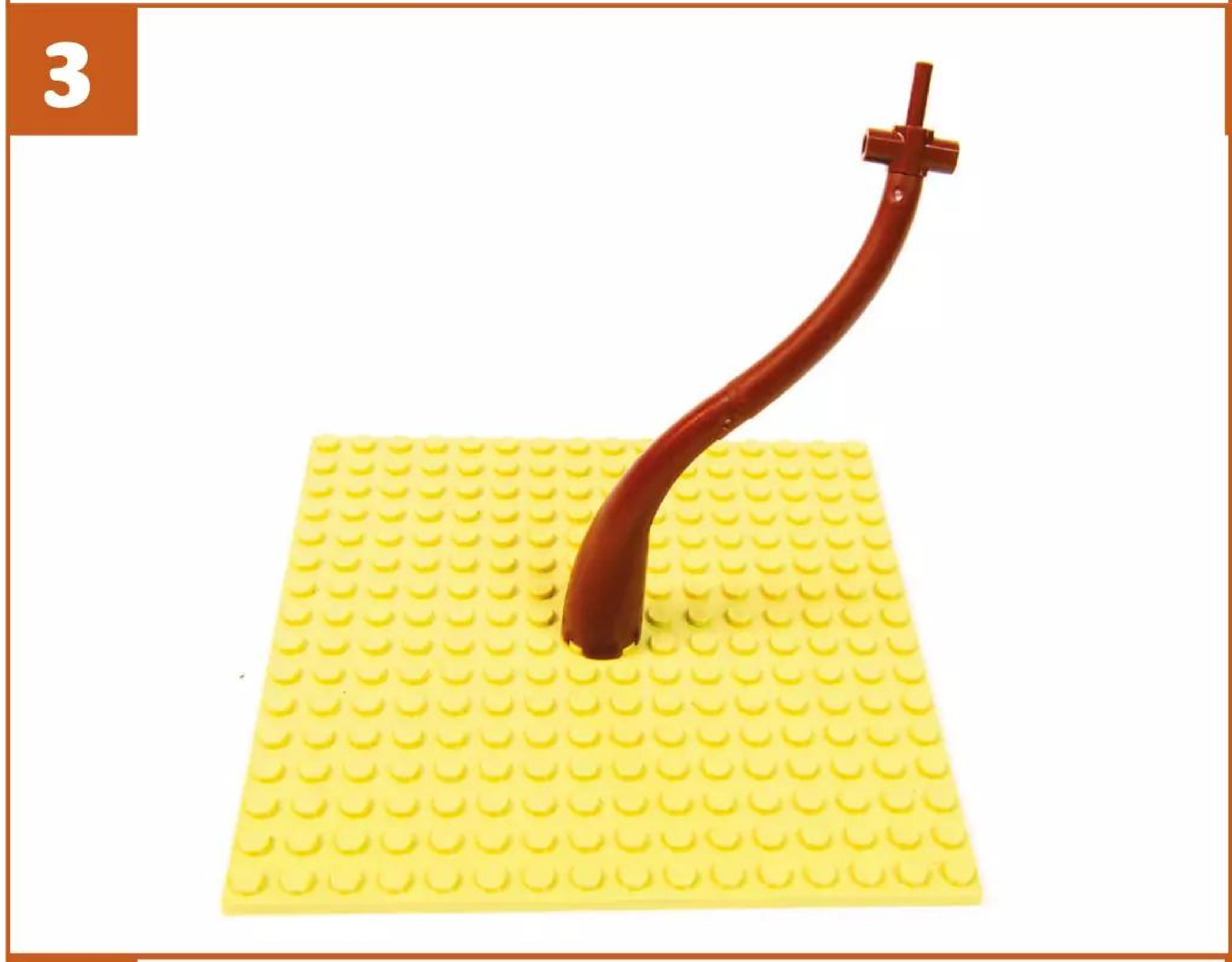
1



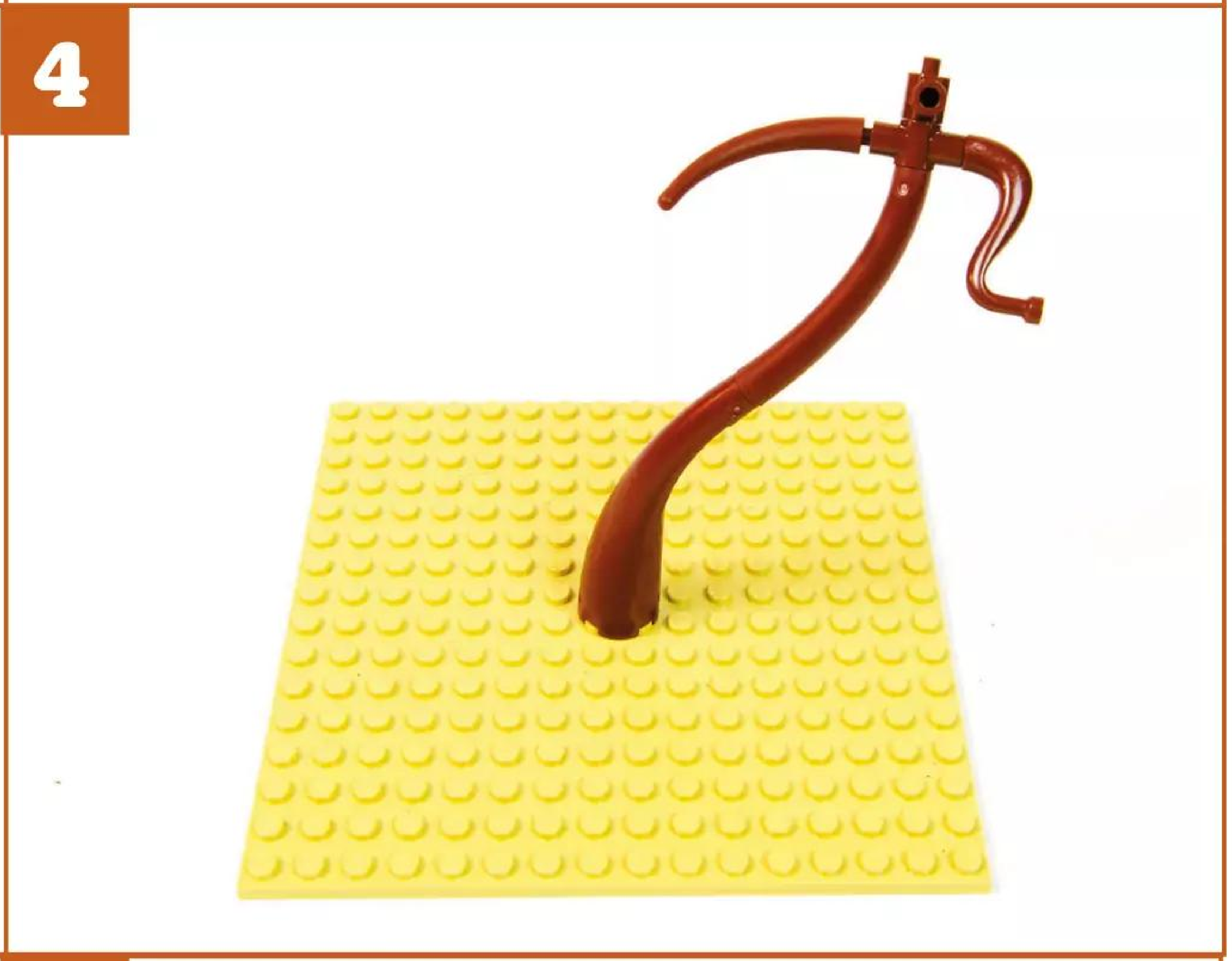
2



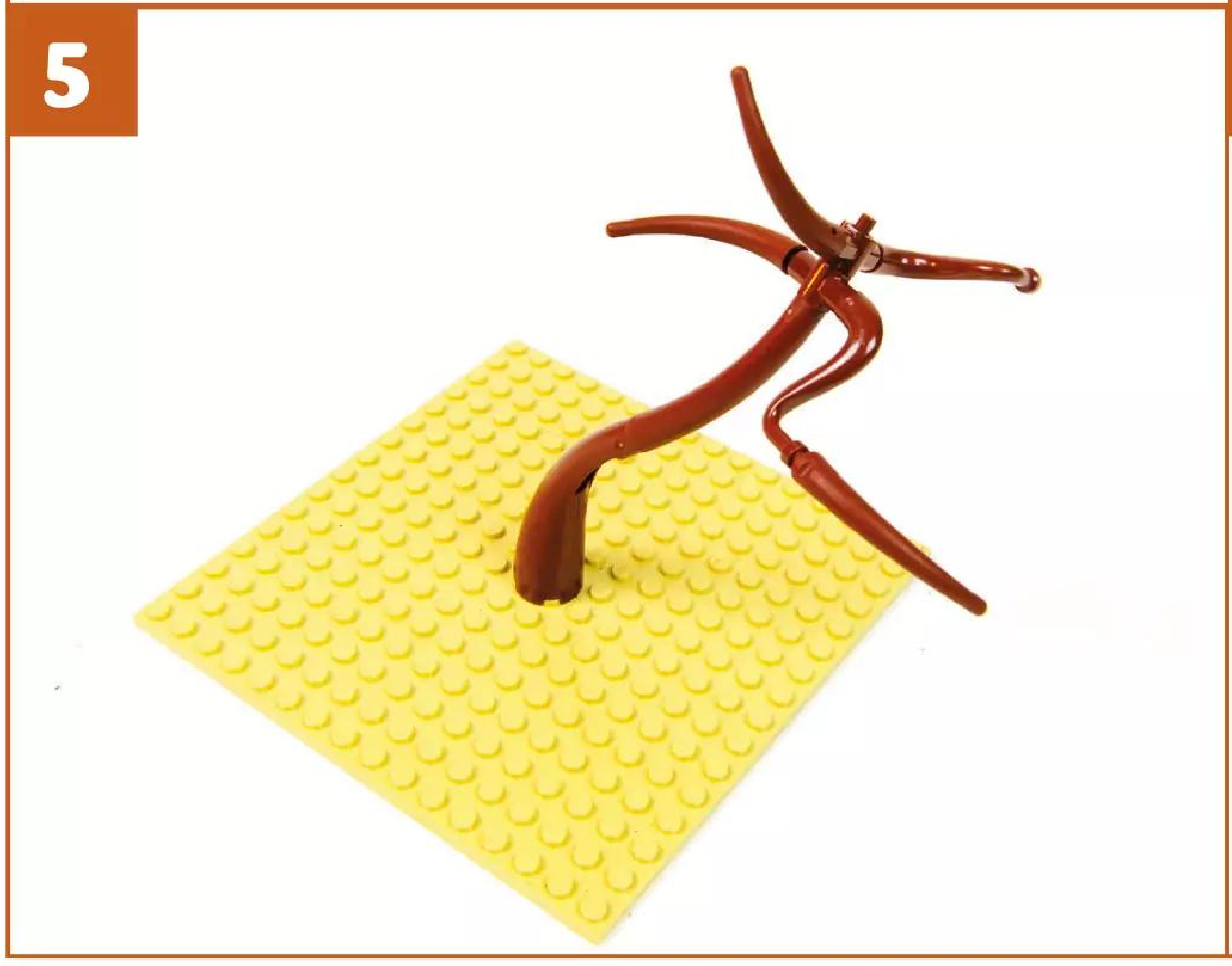
3



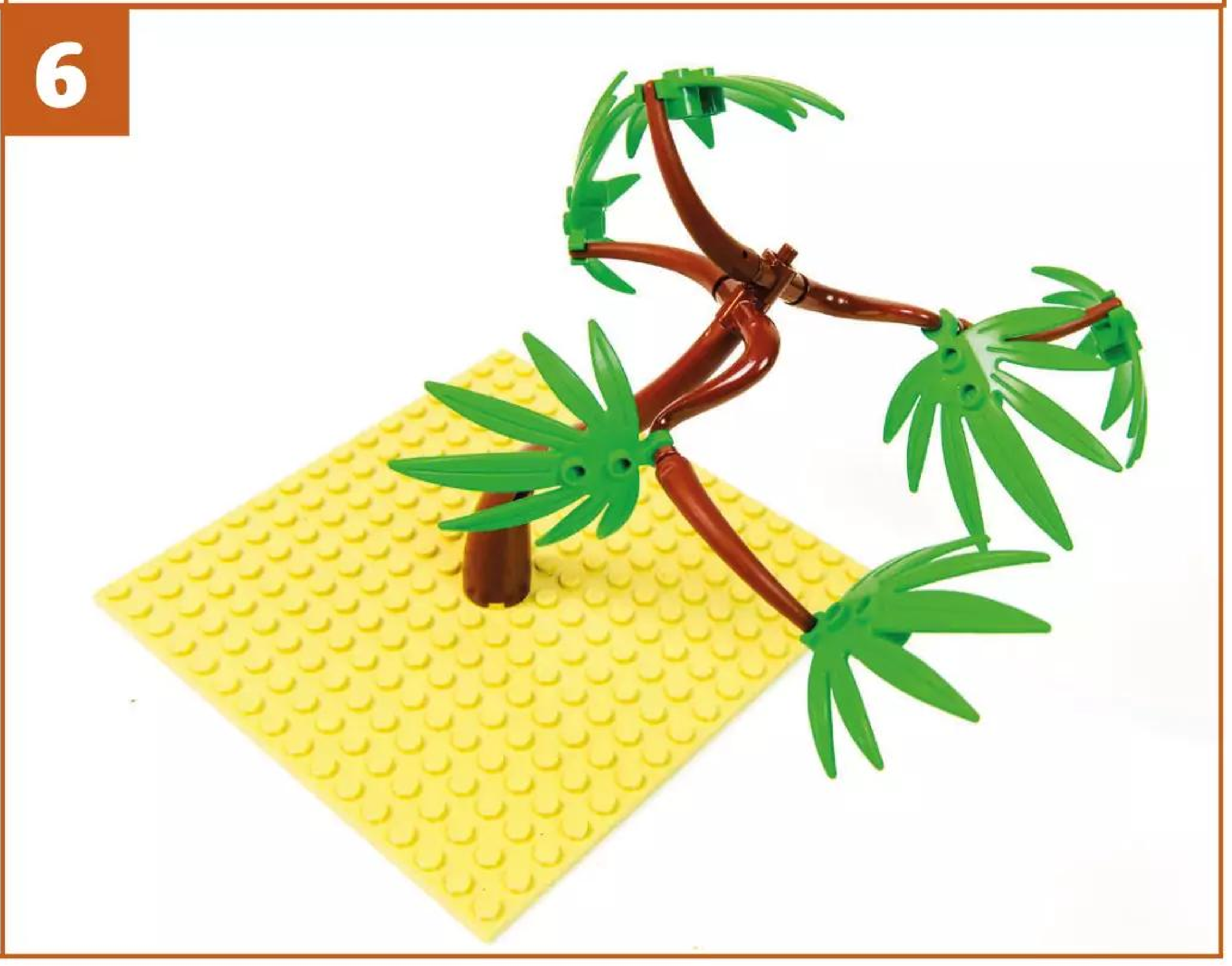
4



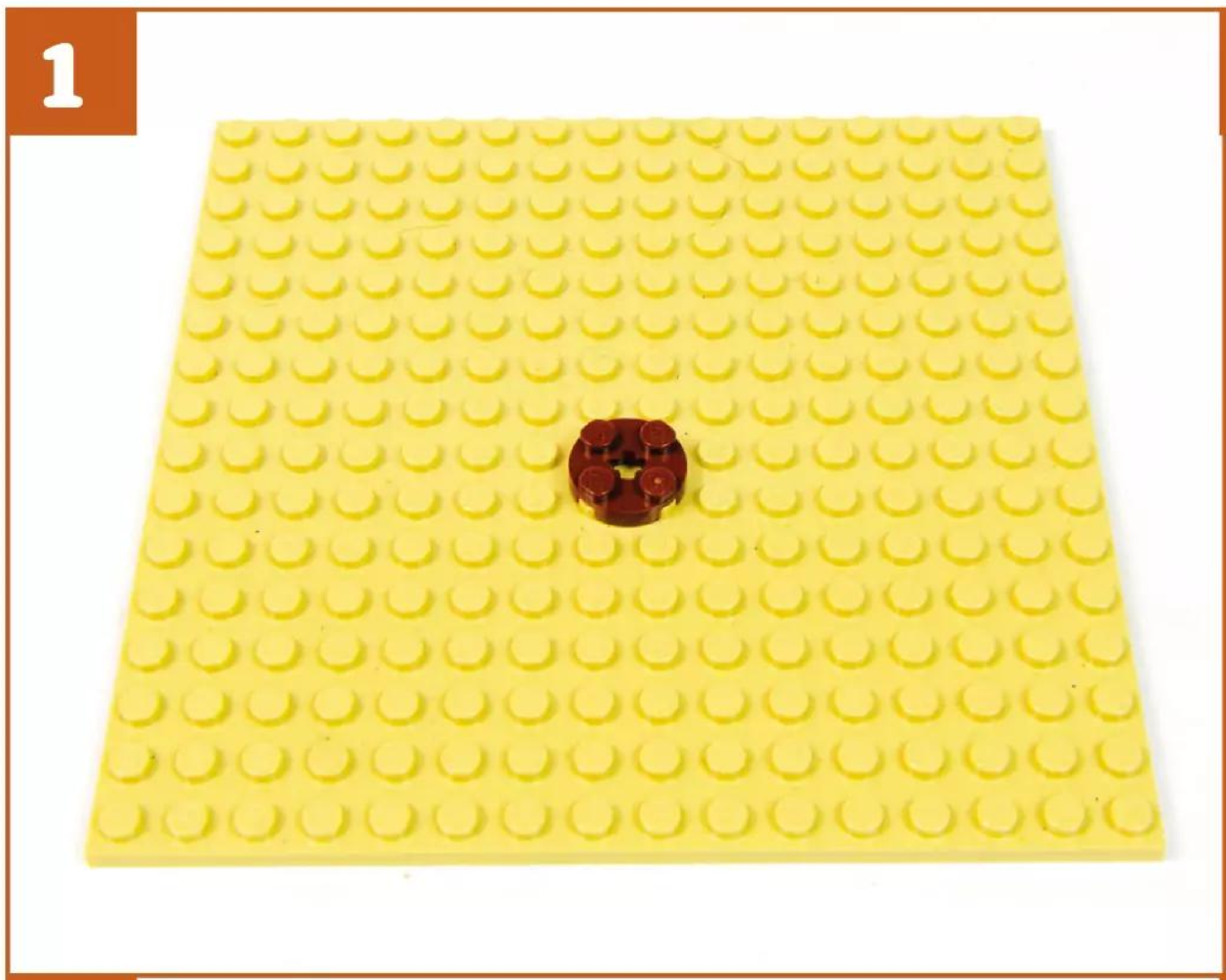
5



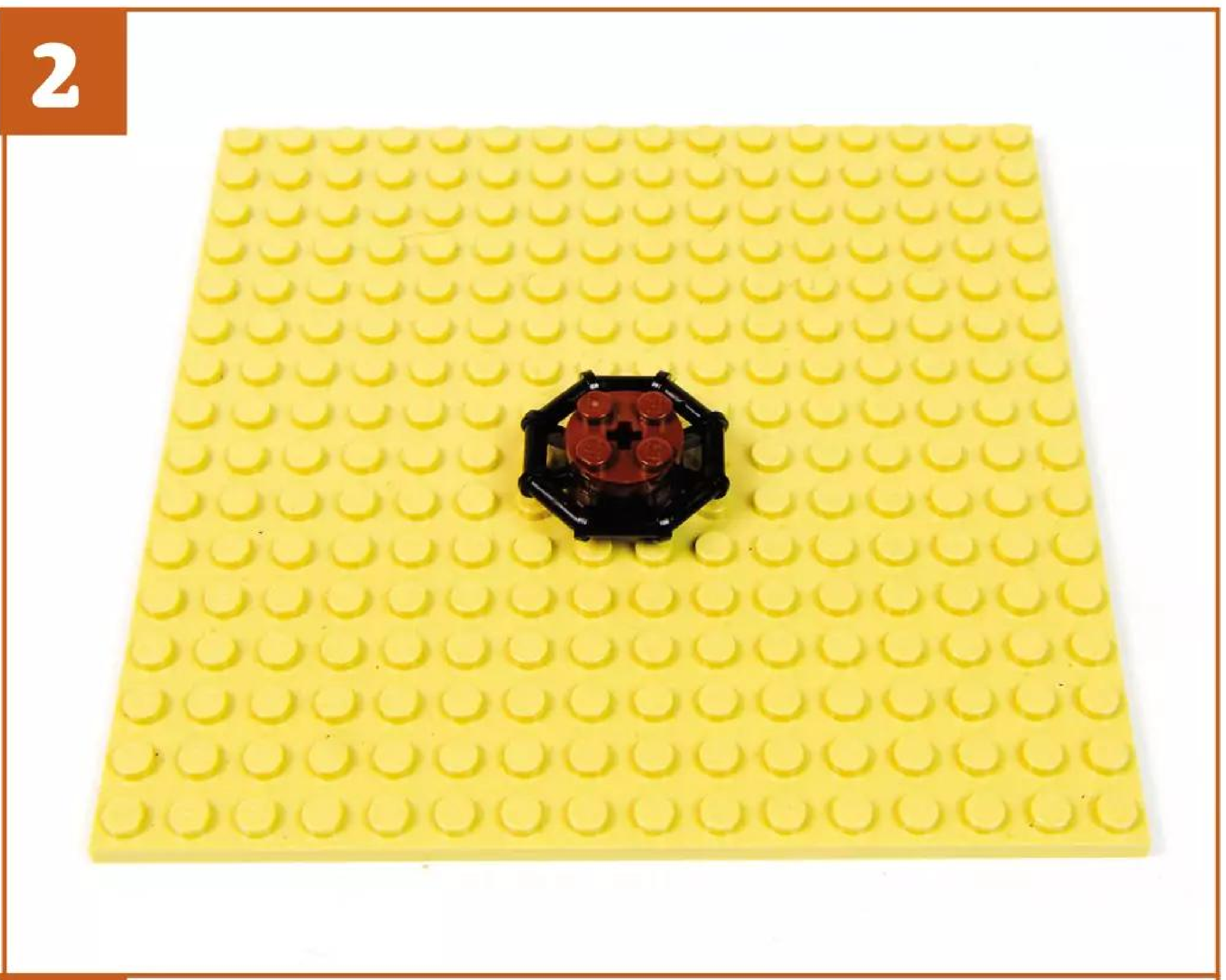
6



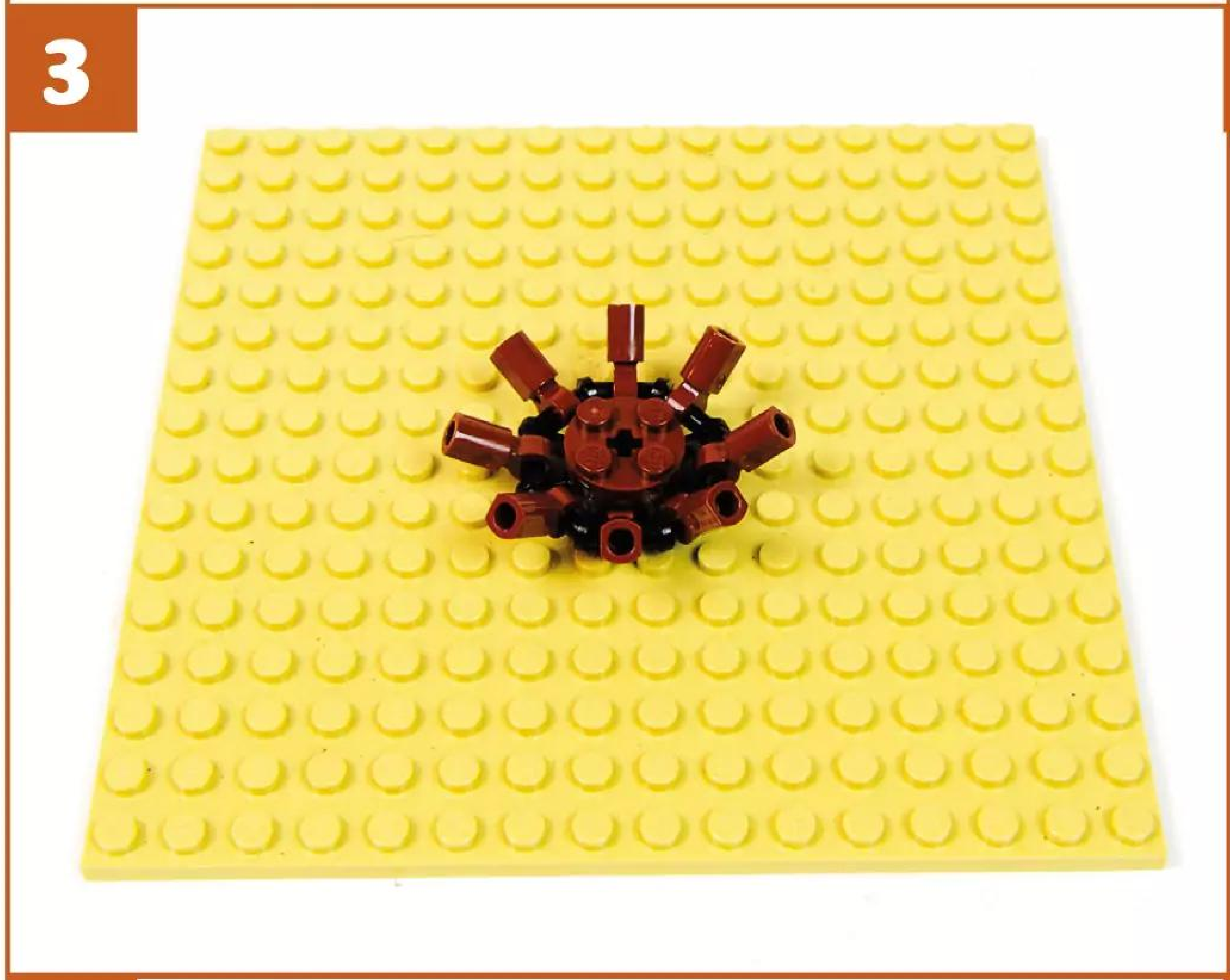
1



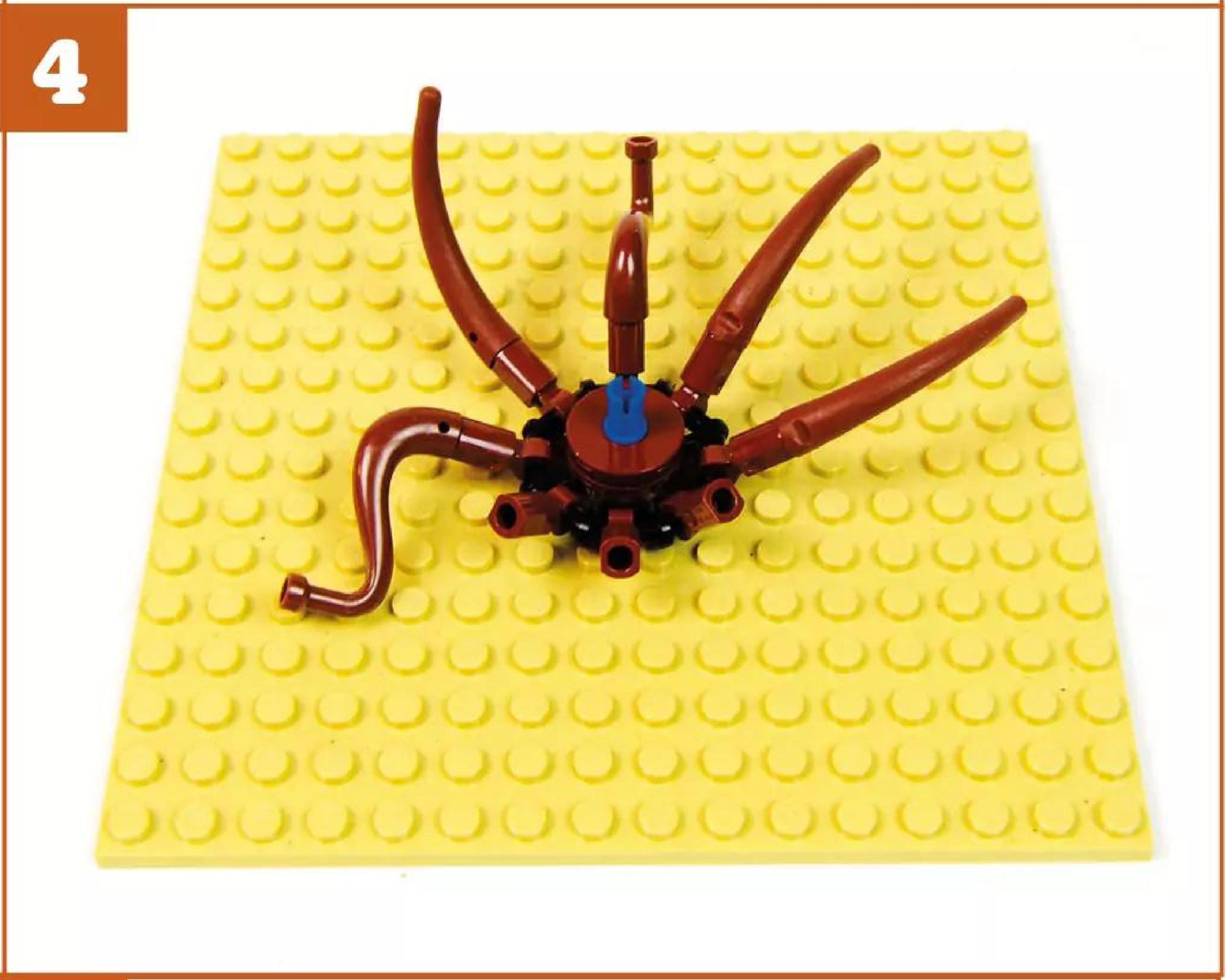
2



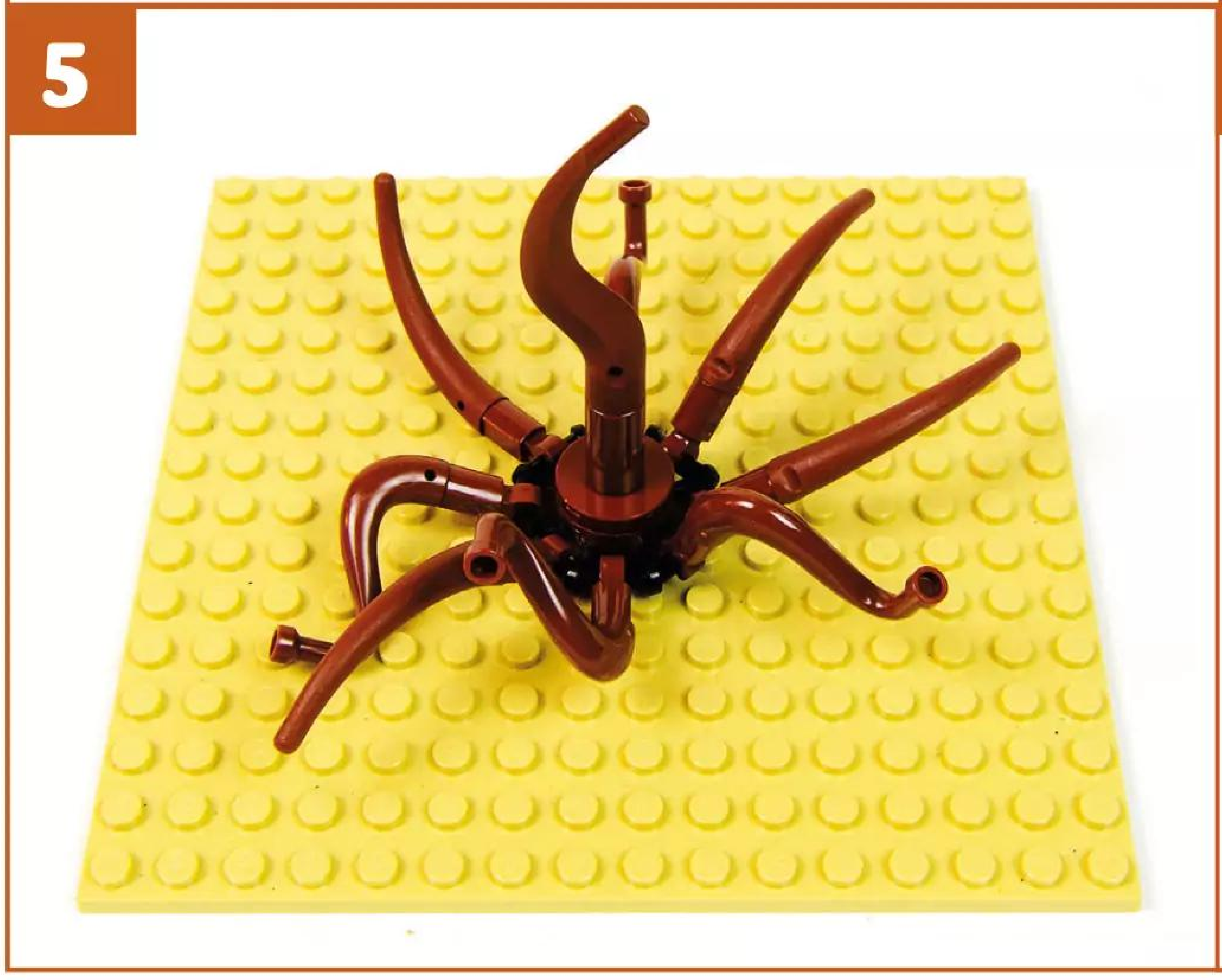
3



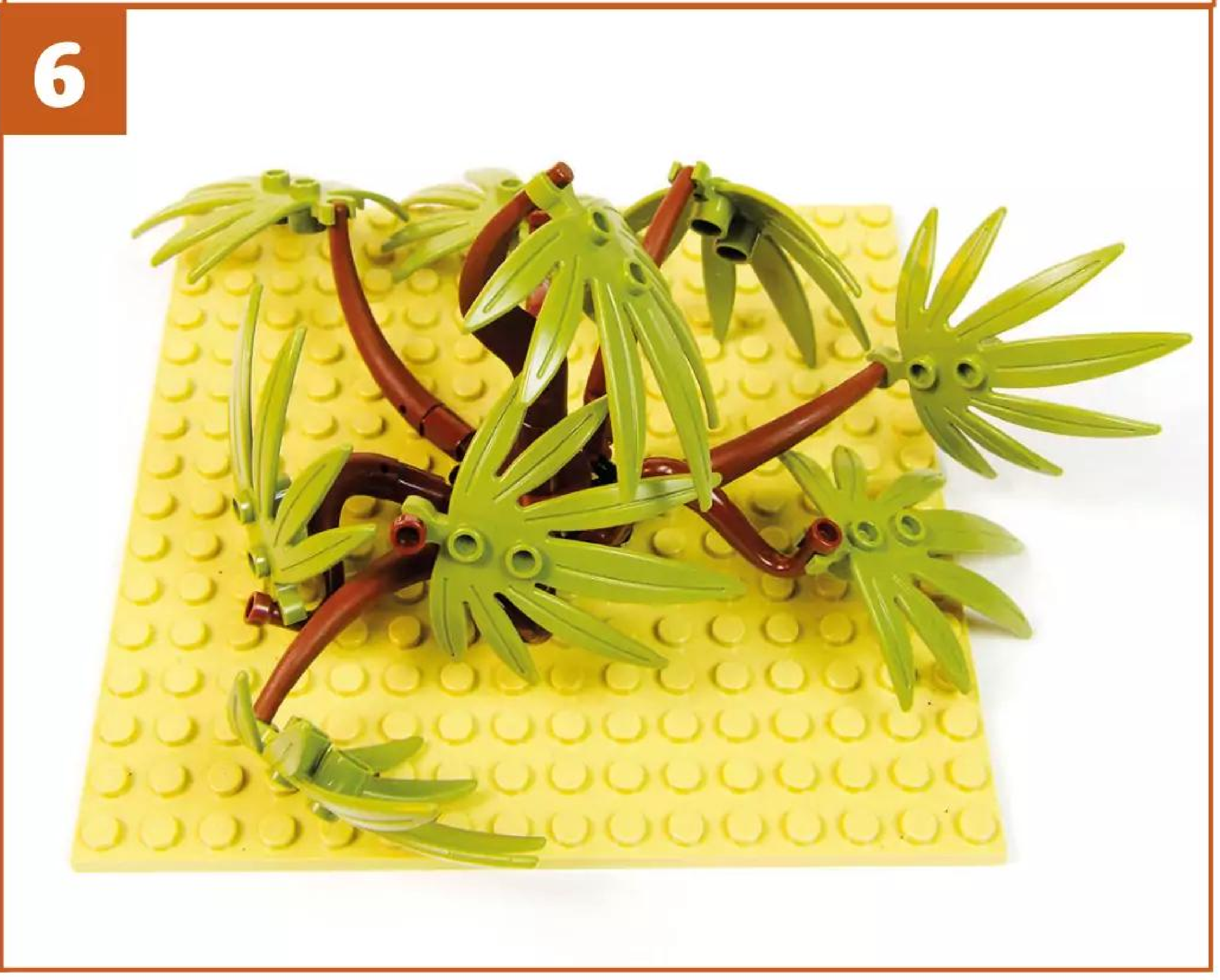
4



5



6



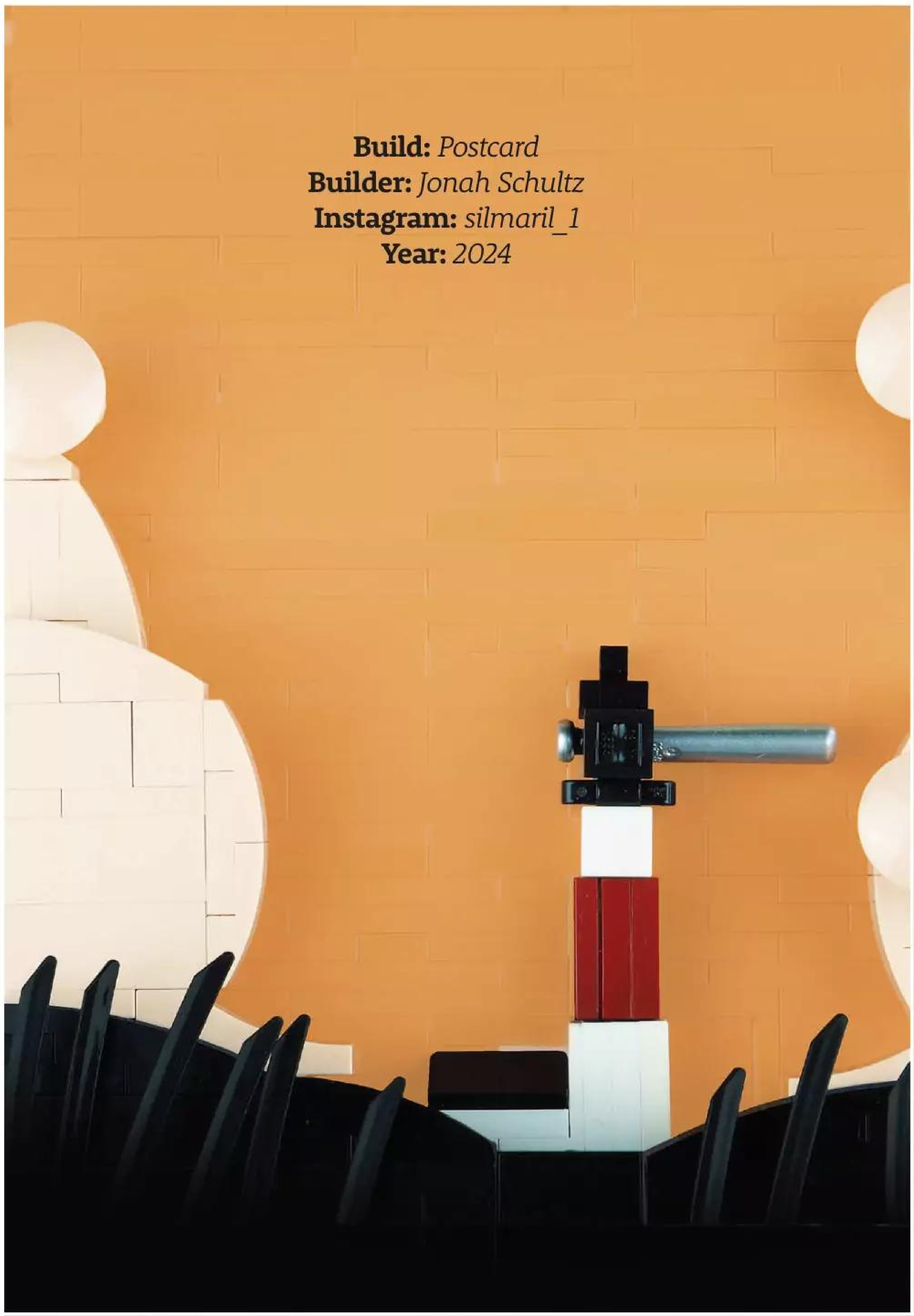
UNDERGROWTH TREE

Jungles may have tall canopies, but much of the action happens in the lower layers. Here, monkeys swing, predators roam and snakes slither among the branches. Depicting this layer of the jungle requires spreading as many branches in as many directions as possible so that there are leaves covering the surface, pointing in every which way.

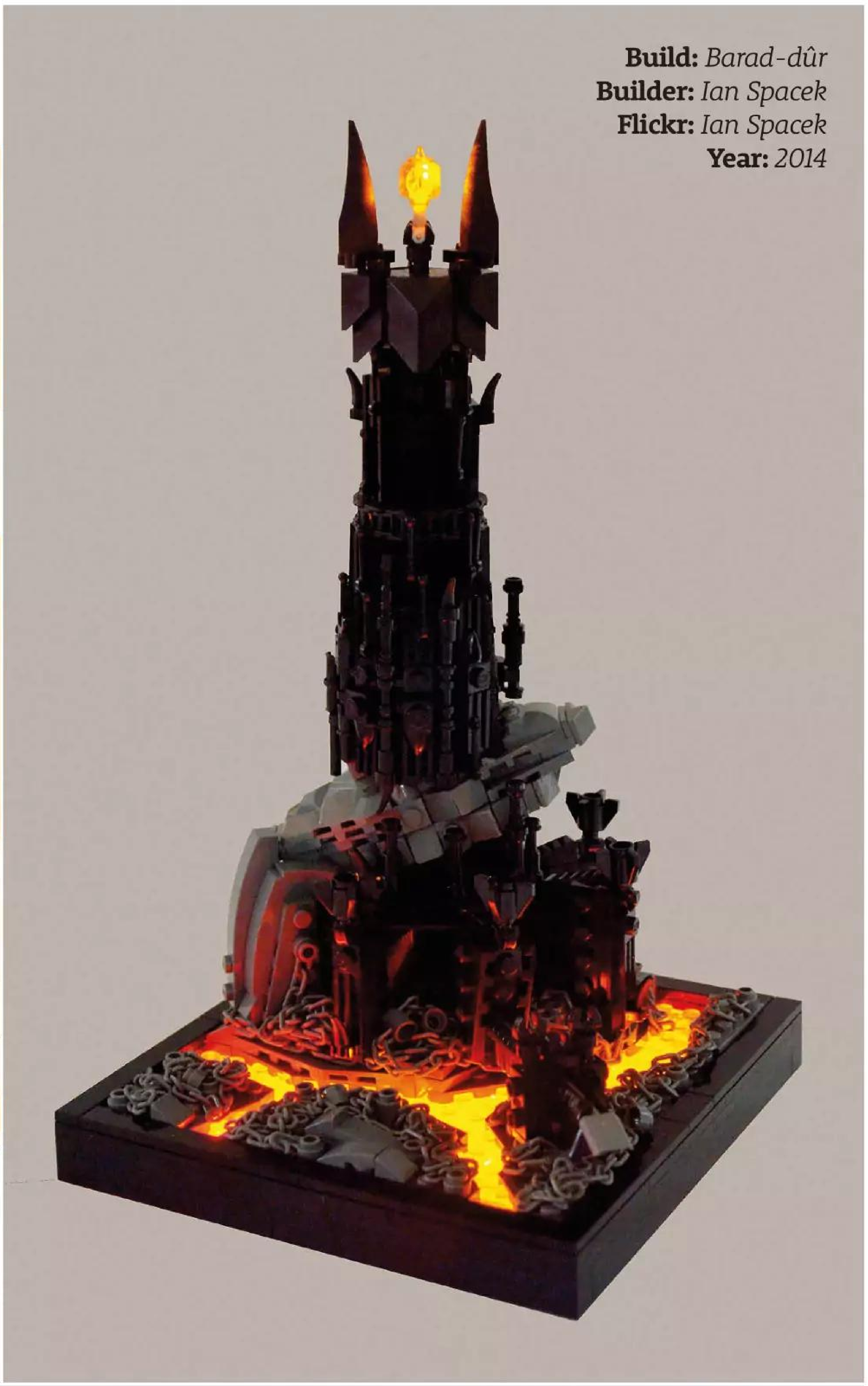
Creating such cacophony, ironically, begins with one of the most symmetrical and ordered of LEGO elements – the octagonal 8 bar component. Clip bar holders, with their holes facing out at different heights and angles, to this. These can then receive branch components. As with the canopy tree, the more variations the better. You should cap each with a leaf, which can be rotated and positioned to further exaggerate the chaos.

Placing different copies of these mini builds close together so that they overlap and interweave creates a compelling understory. Place ferns and other foliage elements in the open spaces so that no stud of jungle floor is left untouched.

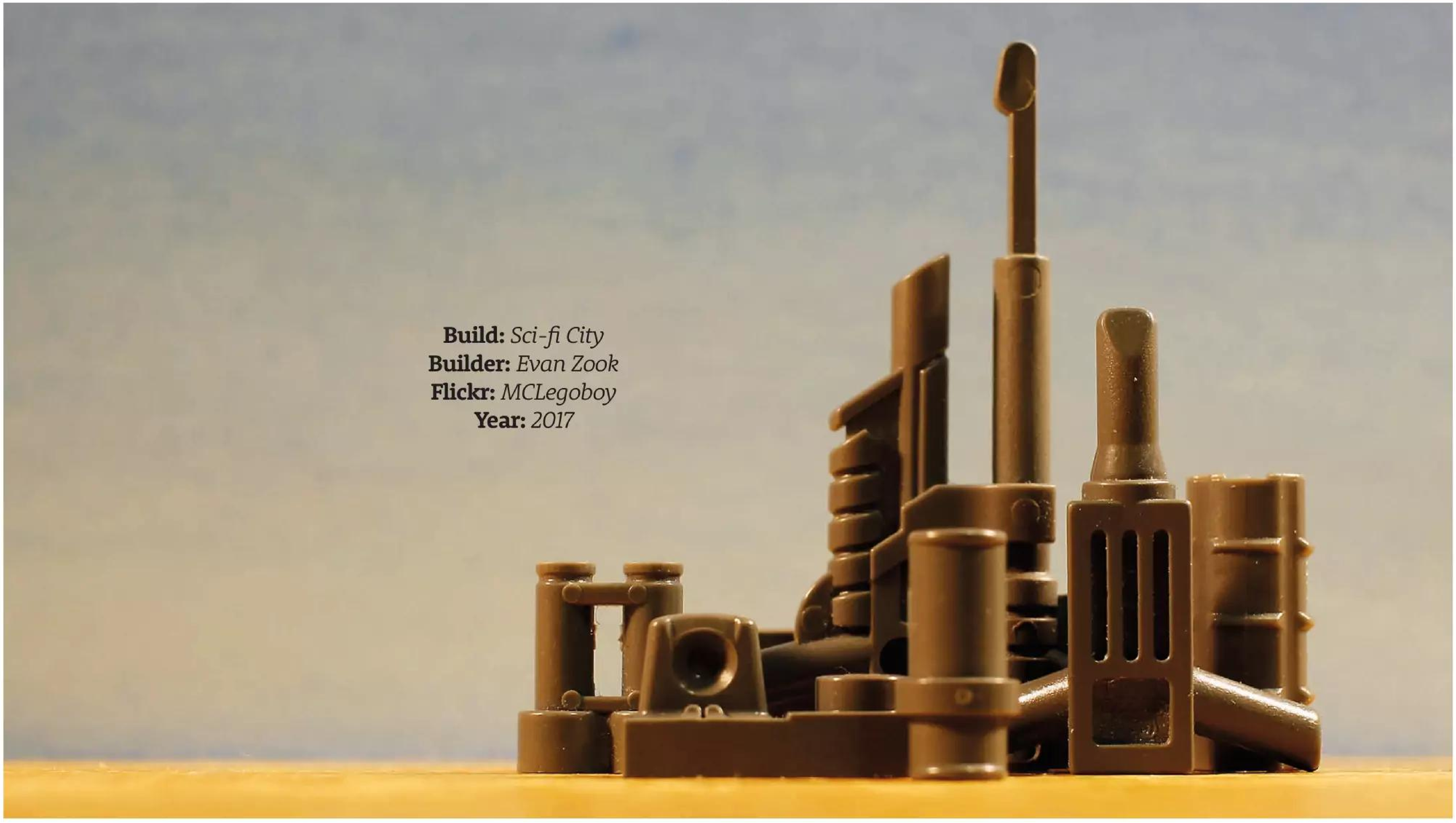
Microscale



Build: *Postcard*
Builder: *Jonah Schultz*
Instagram: *silmaril_1*
Year: *2024*



Build: *Barad-dûr*
Builder: *Ian Spacek*
Flickr: *Ian Spacek*
Year: *2014*



Build: *Sci-fi City*
Builder: *Evan Zook*
Flickr: *MCLegoboy*
Year: *2017*

Build: *I.E.A. Horizon Lunar Launch Base*
Builder: *Chris Malloy*
Flickr: *porschecm2*
Year: *2024*

Build: *In Nomine Patris*
Builder: *Jens Ohrndorf*
Flickr: *moctown*
Year: *2015*

Build: *Kandor*
Instagram: *grantmasters*
Year: *2018*

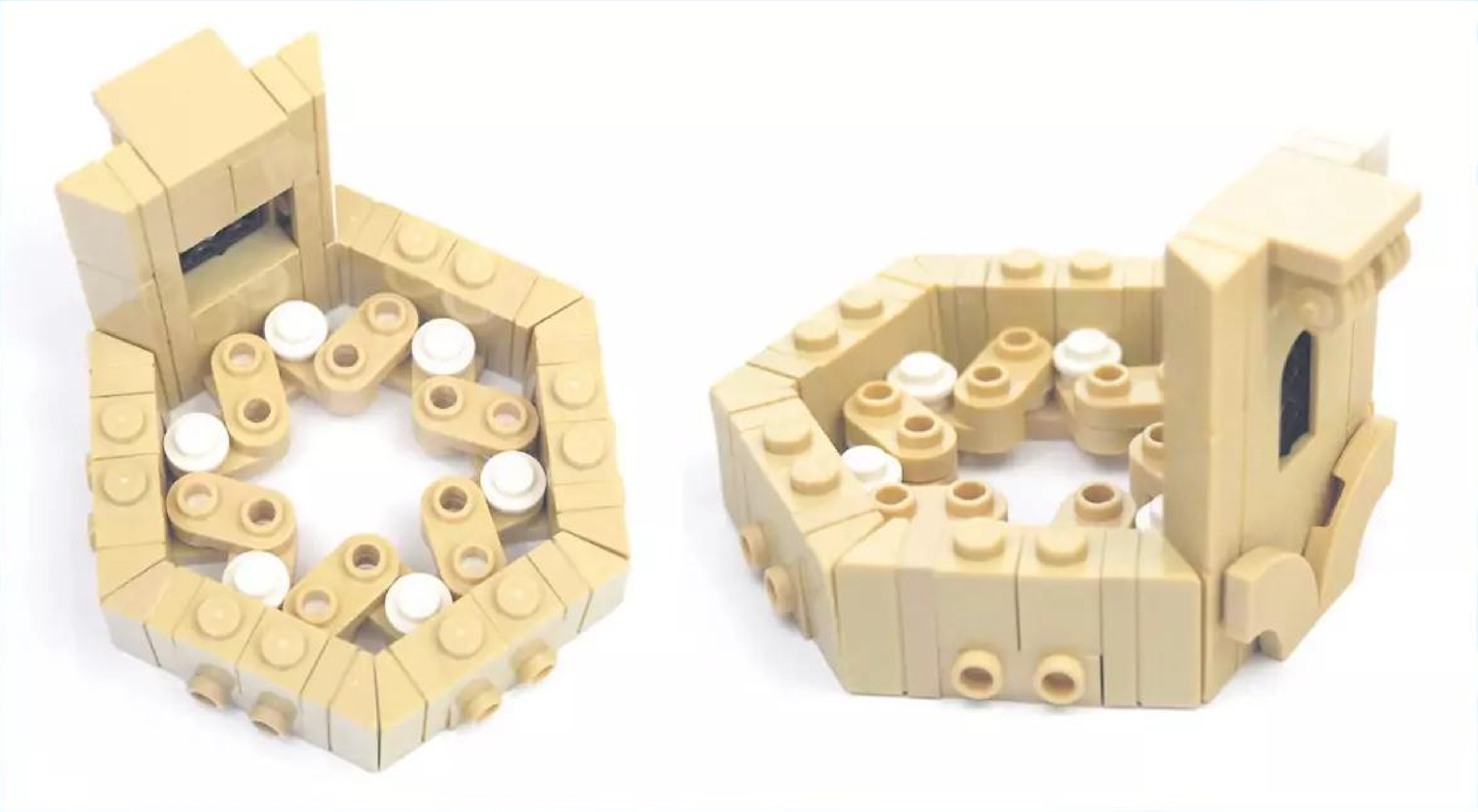
Build: *Dinarides Village*
Builder: *Isaiah Durand*
Instagram: *isaiahdurandearl*
Year: *2024*

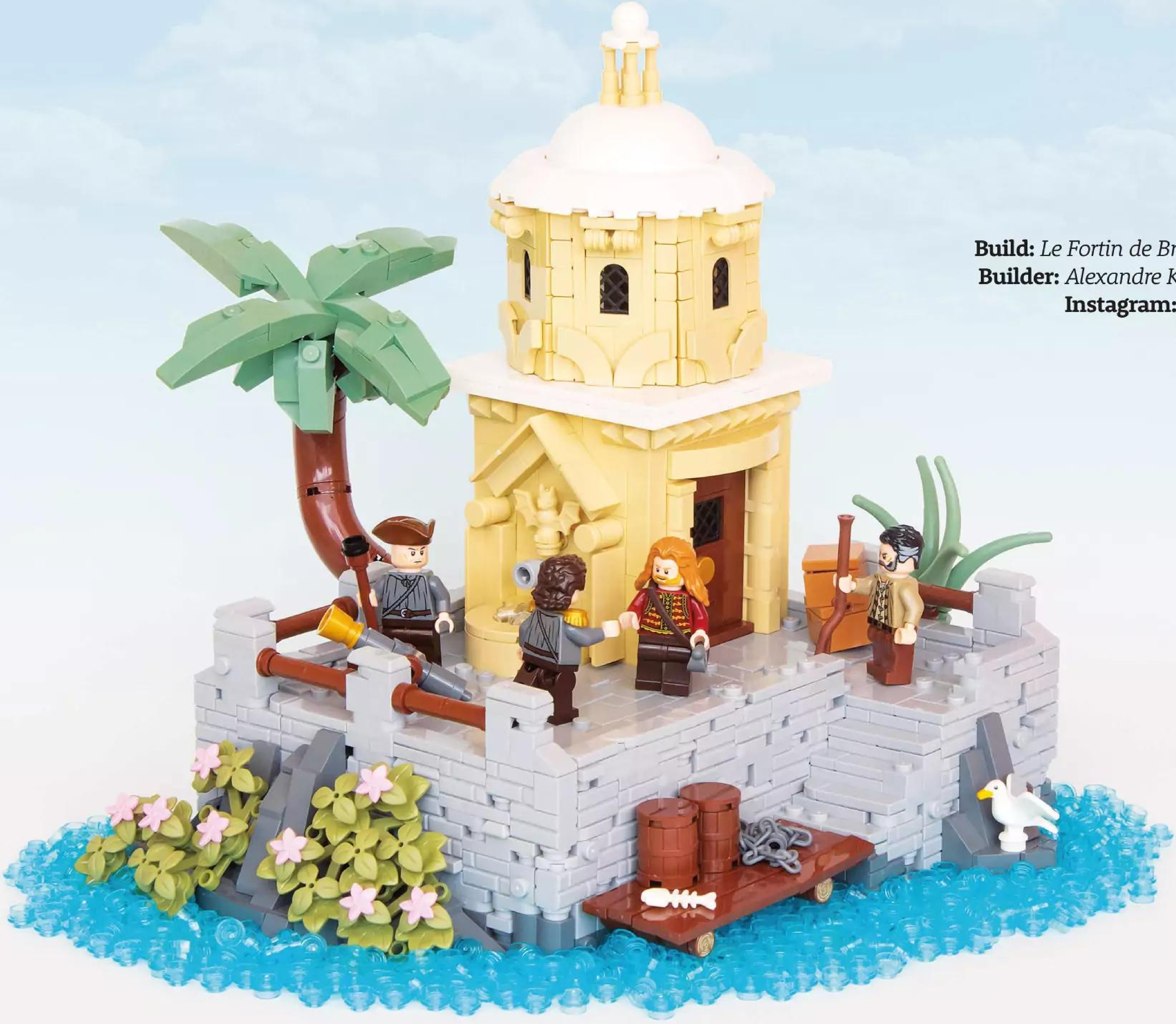
Build: *Theed Hangar*
Builder: *Eli Willsea*
Instagram: *forlornempire*
Year: *2020*

Technique Spotlight

LE FORTIN DE BRISE-ÉCUME

Whether you're a seagull looking for fishbones, a merchant looking for a deal or an architect looking for round tower inspiration, this is the place to be





Build: *Le Fortin de Brise-Écume*
Builder: *Alexandre Koemmerer*
Instagram: *bryckland*
Year: *2023*

Equipped with both a fountain and a cannon, Alexandre Koemmerer's seaside fortress is clearly a place equally ready for peace or war. The texture-rich stonework contrasts perfectly with the smoother, more ornate walls of the watchtower while the muted tones of the vegetation play well with the other light colours used throughout the build. Above it all sits a round tower topped by a snowy white dome, where visitors can say their prayers or keep a sharp lookout for approaching ships.

Creating something round out of square bricks is arguably the most consistent challenge LEGO builders have faced since the first 2x4 came out of its mould. With the help of a few sideways cheese slopes, Alexandre's hexagon design is smooth enough to present the illusion of a cylinder, making for an elegant finish to his fort's watchtower. Inside the tower, 1x2 rounded plates combine flexibility with stability for achieving the off-grid angles needed to make this small hexagon work. There's even room to run a stack of bricks through the hexagon for a stable, on-grid connection with the roof. It's a classic case of a relatively new part — rounded plates in this case — opening up a whole new circle of possibilities.

GENEVA DURAND

LIMITED EDITION POSTER
LAST FEW REMAINING!

WWW.**BLOCKSMAG.COM/SHOP**

1985

FOR UNDER £20 YOU COULD BUY...

6055 Prisoner Convoy

It's tough to believe, but back in the 1980s the LEGO Group wasn't actually pumping out legions of Castle sets every single year. 1985 saw just three launch, the biggest of which was the 115-piece 6055 Prisoner Convoy. Five of those elements are a quintet of horses – four to pull its carriage and one for a Lion Knight to ride – while the rest comprise the wagon, prisoner and three Lion Knights. The carriage makes shrewd use of castle wall panels to give it some heft, while the flag at the back can be used to lock the transport and prevent the civilian escaping. No clues here as to who this guy was, but he must have been bricking bad...

6055
LEGOLAND
LEGO

FOR UNDER £50 YOU COULD BUY...

7715
LEGO
Train Set
without motor.
Motor can be added.
With circle of track,
station platform & figures.
Building instructions
included.
Train
sans moteur.
A l'intérieur, une notice
de montage. Un moteur
peut être incorporé.
Komplete
Handtrein.
Met bouwaanwijzing.
Motor kan worden
ingebouwd.
DB
7715

7715 Push-Along Passenger Steam Train

The LEGO Group upgraded the vast majority of its rolling stock in 1985, with some new features more apparent than others. 7715 Push-Along Passenger Steam Train built on its predecessor 7710 most obviously by mixing up the colour scheme of its carriages, but look a little closer and you'll spot more dramatic differences between these two trains – especially the locomotives, where the newer version is rocking more refined pieces and functioning doors. True to its name, there's no motor here, but there is a dummy version that can be swapped out for the real thing. That's forward thinking.

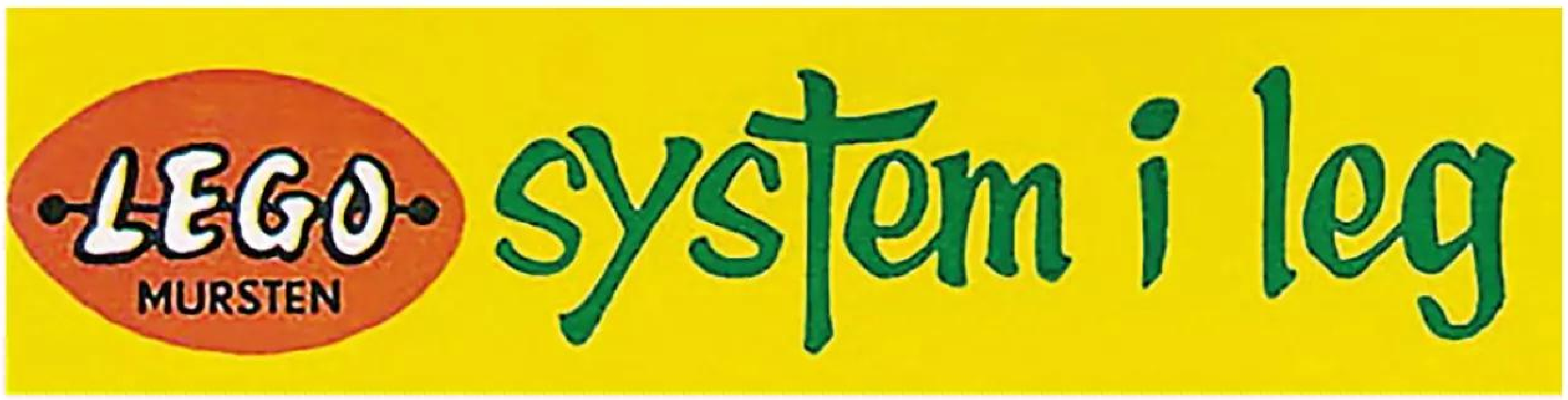
FOR UNDER £100 YOU COULD BUY...

6392 Airport

LEGO sets didn't boast massive piece counts in the 1980s, but they more than made up for it in sheer shelf presence. Case in point – 6392 Airport contains just 530 pieces, which in 2025 might get you half an aeroplane or maybe a couple of runway vehicles. Forty years ago, it was enough to build out an entire airport, complete with a runway that stretches over four and a half baseplates, a terminal building, an aeroplane, a helicopter and a baggage truck. There's plenty of life here too, with a baggage claim, waiting area, restaurant, control tower and no fewer than eight minifigures. It's boxy and dated by today's standards, but back in 1985 it was enough to make anyone's imagination take flight.

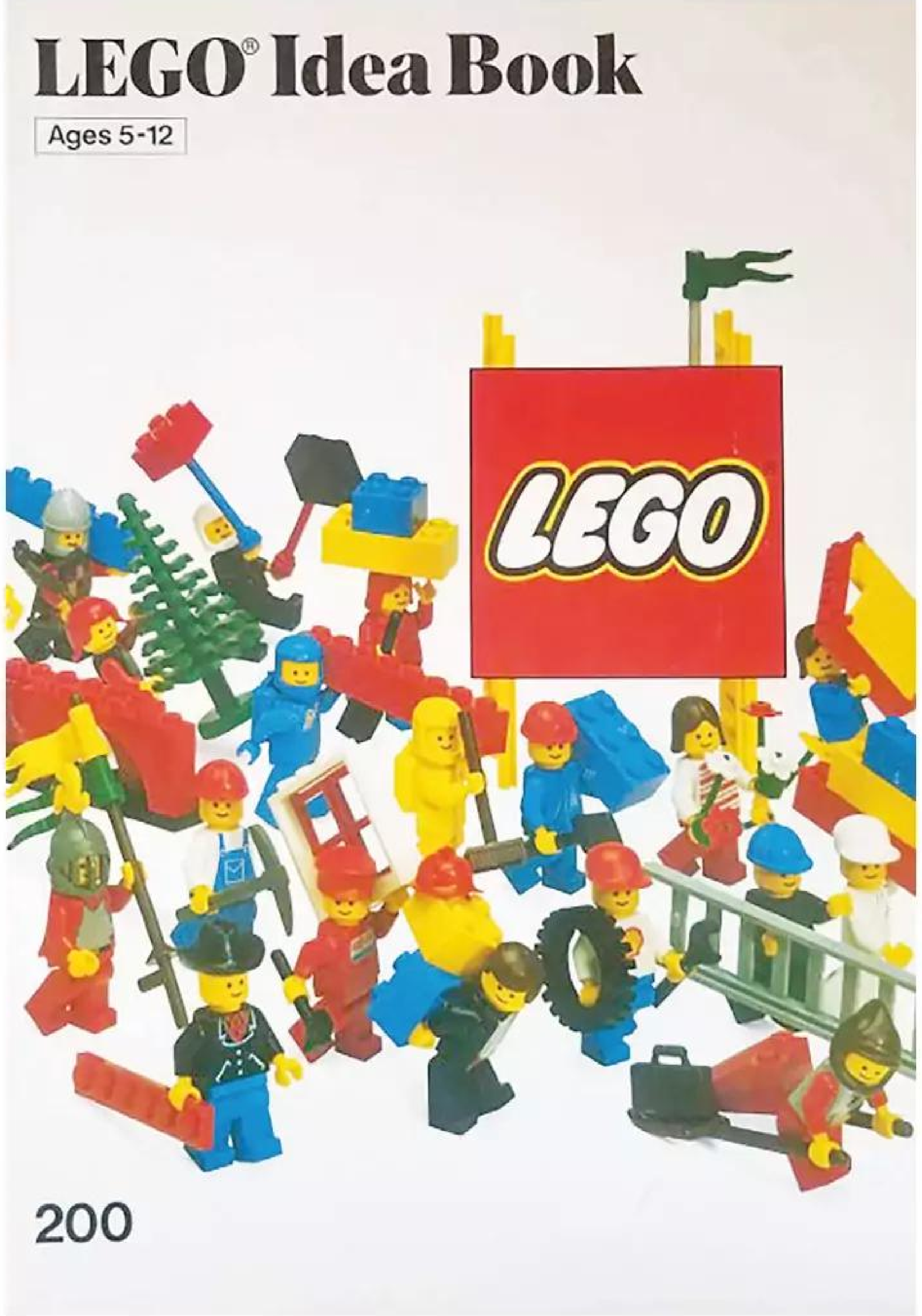
6392
LEGOLAND
LEGO
LL-BEL

MILESTONES, SQUARED



While the LEGO Group as a company dates back to 1932, the LEGO System that we know today – consisting of bricks, plates, minifigures and so on – first debuted under the moniker 'System i Leg' (or 'System of Play') in 1955. That made 1985 the 30th anniversary of the company's core product range and it celebrated that milestone with another – hiring its 5,000th employee. More than half of those staff were based in Billund, reflecting the LEGO Group's relatively small-scale operations at the time (at least compared to where it sits 40 years later).

GREAT IDEA, BOSS



If you were after inspiration for things to build or ways to build them back in the 1980s, you couldn't just hop on to Instagram or Flickr for quick and easy answers. Instead, you had to make do with things like the LEGO Idea Book, with 1985's release – numbered 200 – serving up a plethora of Town, Castle and Space related builds for you to try out at home. But while modern LEGO books often include a handful of pieces with which to get going, this one simply offered a 50-strong sticker sheet. So fingers crossed you already had some bricks to apply them to.

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

The LEGO Group revisited the concept of a sound brick in 2024 with Harry Potter's Talking Sorting Hat, but the idea has roots all the way back in 1985, when the company simultaneously introduced light and sound bricks across Town and Space sets. These elements appeared first in European markets and left behind clunky wired 4.5V and 12V systems of old – typically used for trains – in favour of metal contacts built into their studs, which could pass a current and give life to light and sound. This was also the genesis of the 9V system that would later supplant other electronic processes altogether.

CHRIS WHARFE

6450
LEGOLAND
LIGHT & SOUND SYSTEM
LEGO
POLICE

Meanwhile, outside the LEGO bubble...

HIGHEST GROSSING MOVIE
BACK TO THE FUTURE

BEST SELLING ALBUM
BROTHERS IN ARMS (DIRE STRAITS)

BEST SELLING GAME
SUPER MARIO BROS.

BEST SELLING BOOK
THE MAMMOTH HUNTERS

FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP WINNING TEAM *- IRELAND*

Biggest Set

7745
LEGO
12V

7745 High-Speed City Express Passenger Train Set (736 pieces)

146

SETS RELEASED

Classic Catalogue

85
LEGOLAND
POLICE
LEGO

Time Cruising

Travelling back through the years to look at some of the most memorable LEGO items

MINIFIGURE

1978
POLICE OFFICER

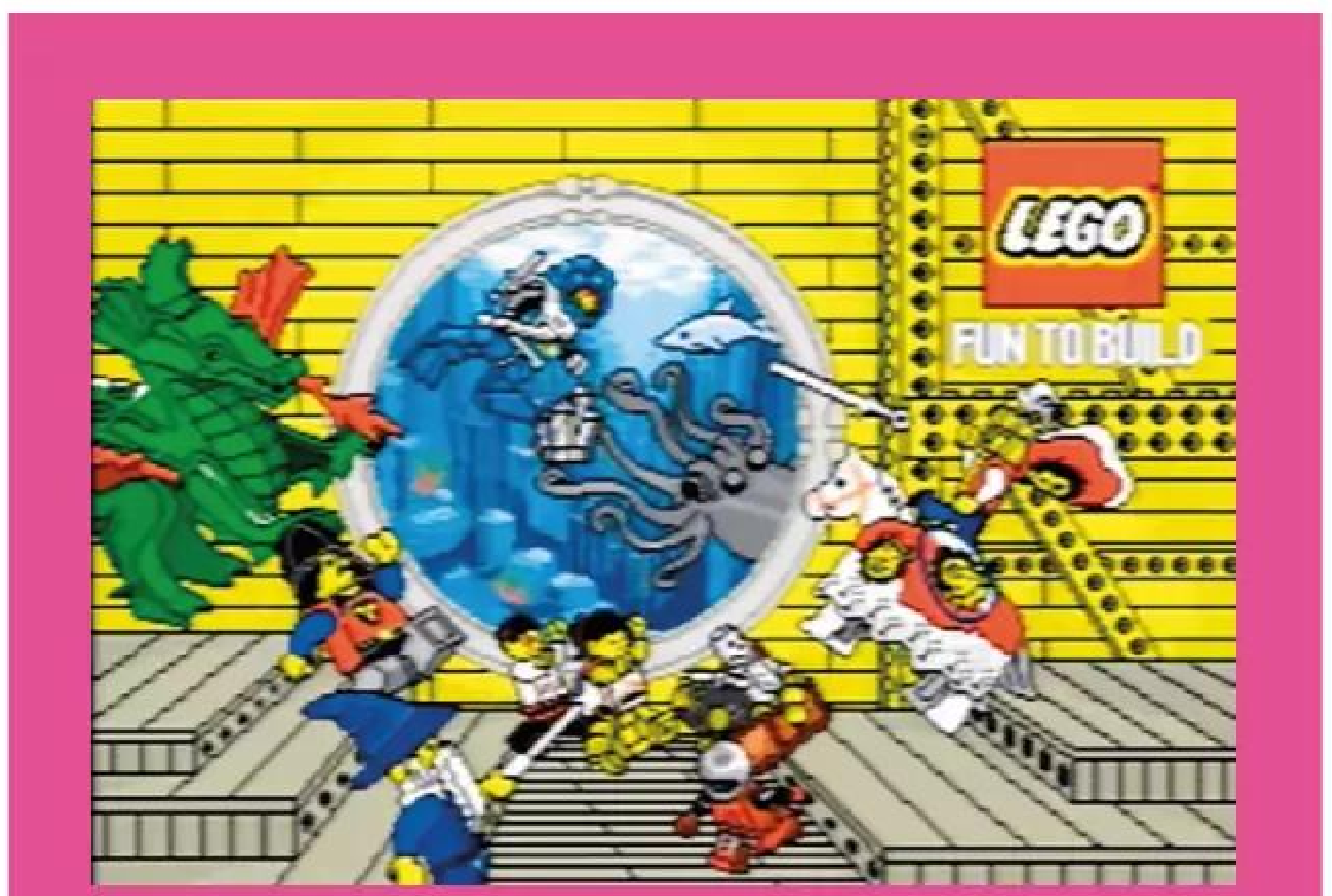
If humankind has a collective hangup, it's that we can't point to one person and say, 'they came first'. Millions of years of evolution have put paid to that notion. Not so for LEGO minifigures. You might enjoy thinking that these tiny plastic people evolved naturally over several millennia, beginning life as atoms of ABS before eventually forming the semi-articulated, sort-of rigid characters we know today, but in fact the very first minifigure has long been identified as 1978's humble police officer.

LEGO police constables have grown and evolved in their own sort of way in the past 47 years, but only at the hands of designers – and they all started here. This smiley minifigure debuted in 600 Police Car and was quickly followed by knights and astronauts across Castle and Space sets in the same year. But even the LEGO Group seemingly couldn't get to grips with its unusual proportions at first – the two-stud wide body of the patrol car was completely incompatible with this police officer, so the best he could manage was to run alongside the vehicle. At least he looks happy about it.

The LEGO Collectible Minifigures team singled out the police officer as the O.G. in 2018's Series 18, celebrating his 40th anniversary by recreating him almost exactly (his very clever accessory was a 1x2 tile printed with 600 Police Car's box art). Given it's only three years until the minifigure's 50th anniversary, it'll be interesting to see how the LEGO Group celebrates that even more monumental milestone. Hopefully by releasing an upscaled Police Officer minifigure and not by, for example, reintroducing the concept of stickered minifigure torsos. Some things are best left in the past...

VIDEO GAME

1995
LEGO FUN TO BUILD



Remember LEGO Fun to Build? Probably not, because it was only ever available in Japan. But that's an unfortunate legacy for what was actually the first ever LEGO video game, released exclusively on the Sega Pico – an educational console that combines picture book-style cartridges with a stylus and pad – in December 1995. Developed and published by Sega, the title tasked players with solving puzzles and exploring four different overworld screens, each hooked to a Town, Castle, Space or underwater biome.

Gamers were still a decade out from TT Games cracking the LEGO video game formula at this point, so the gameplay wasn't exactly going to win any awards. But it did manage to cram in a bunch of different minigames across the four overworlds that kept young kids entertained while hopefully teaching them a few new skills, like how to collect crystals while avoiding sharks and how to use a radar to find scattered pieces of a giant robot in space.

There was some building involved too – this was still a LEGO game – and what you chose to build could even influence which missions you unlocked. Build a pizza truck, for example, and suddenly you were a pizza delivery guy racing around town to feed the starving masses. But piece together a speedboat or dune buggy, and instead you'd find yourself in a top-down race to the finish line.

What LEGO Fun to Build didn't really boast was replayability: once you'd worked your way through the four overworlds and their respective games, you'd be met with an ending screen that allowed you to doodle with the stylus and place a random assortment of bricks. Given you could do the same or better with a real pen and paper and physical LEGO pieces, it probably didn't hold the attention of many children for long.

Still, all great dynasties have to start somewhere. And where LEGO video games are concerned, that was... on the Sega Pico.

THEME

2002
DROME RACERS

The LEGO Group once had a dedicated Racers theme – and under that umbrella, an entire roster of racing subthemes. Drome Racers revved up at the starting line in 2002 and continued to loop around LEGO Stores until the end of 2004, with no fewer than 53 sets.

What's interesting about Drome Racers is that the LEGO Group cooked up an entire backstory and world, leaning into the wider storytelling that was already working well for the likes of BIONICLE at the turn of the millennium. At the centre of the narrative was Dromulus, who was responsible for conceiving of the eponymous drome in which racers competed.

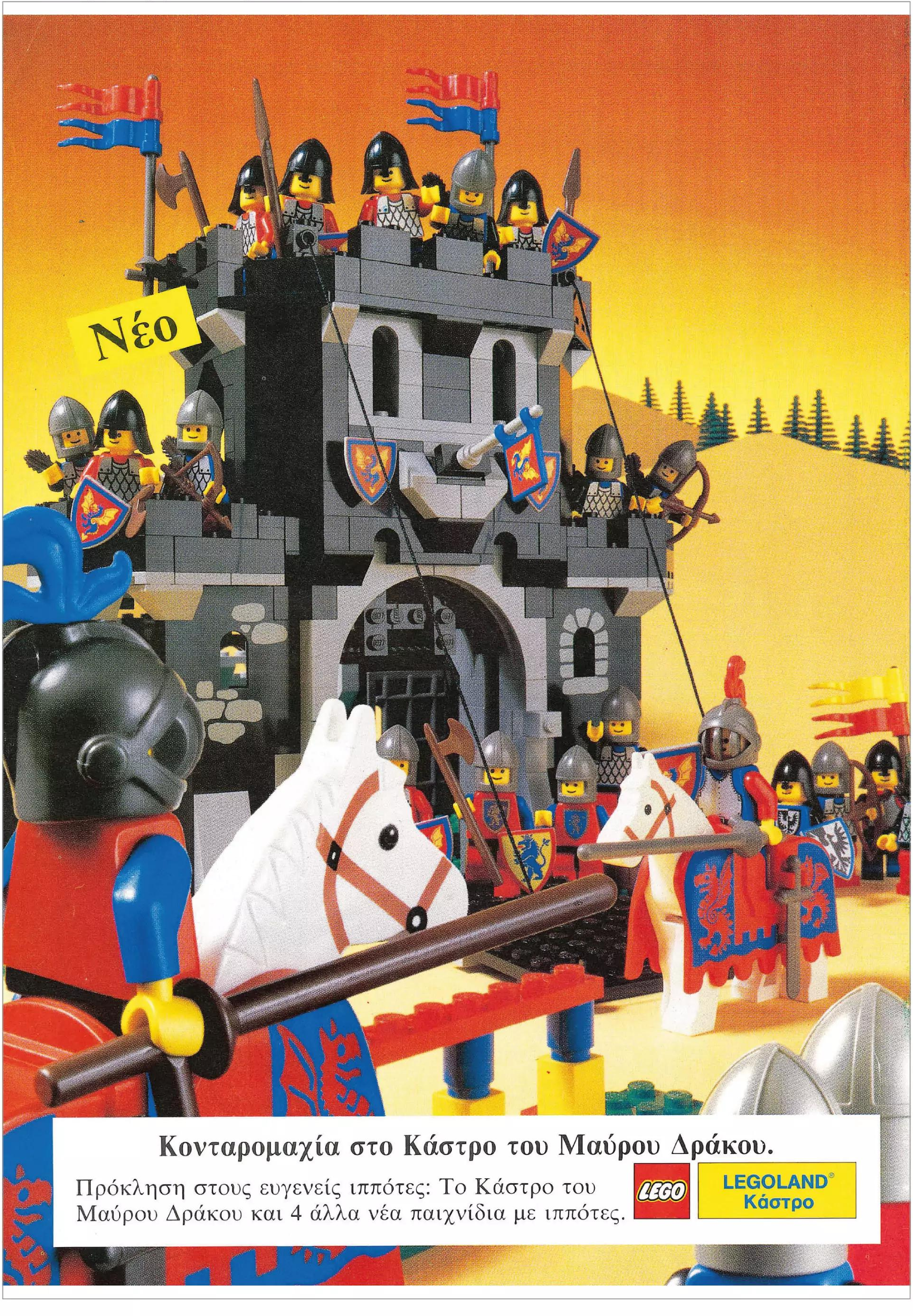
The numbers feel a little like they were plucked from thin air – the arena could seat 4 million spectators, required 6 billion tonnes of concrete to build and spanned more than 330 miles of track – but they set the stage for a theme that would go on to span not just its vast product line, but also online comics, video games and even a 4D movie at LEGOLAND parks.

Demonstrating even keener awareness of what pulls in motorsport audiences, Drome Racers also split most of its sets between six different teams: R.E.D., H.O.T., Zero, Nitro, Maverick and EXO Force, that final moniker presumably planting seeds for what would emerge as its own theme four years later.

While modern LEGO cars are committed to specific scales across different themes, Drome Racers encompassed every scale imaginable, from tiny racers that reused Xalax's unusual two-piece characters through bikes, cars and trucks that eschewed minifigures entirely. System and Technic were both in the mix here too, while Drome Racers even managed to conjure up multiple physical racetracks – a rare sight in LEGO racing sets, and almost unimaginable today. If only LEGO Mario Kart was a thing in 2002...

CHRIS WHARFE

This advertisement from 1991 highlights the Black Knights in LEGO Castle.



Κονταρομαχία στο Κάστρο του Μαύρου Δράκου.

Πρόκληση στους ευγενείς ιππότες: Το Κάστρο του Μαύρου Δράκου και 4 άλλα νέα παιχνίδια με ιππότες.

6585 ***Theme:*** *Extreme Team* / ***Year:*** *1998* / ***Average selling price new:*** *£18* / ***Average selling price used:*** *£4* / ***Recommended age:*** *6-10* / ***Minifigures:*** *1* / ***Pieces:*** *19*

Hang-Glider

Are things extreme enough for you? Build this hang glider and take your minifigures into the sky

During the 1990s, the popularity of extreme sports exploded. The LEGO Group usually stayed away from cultural fads, but as the company tried new things and sought new consumers, it followed more trends.

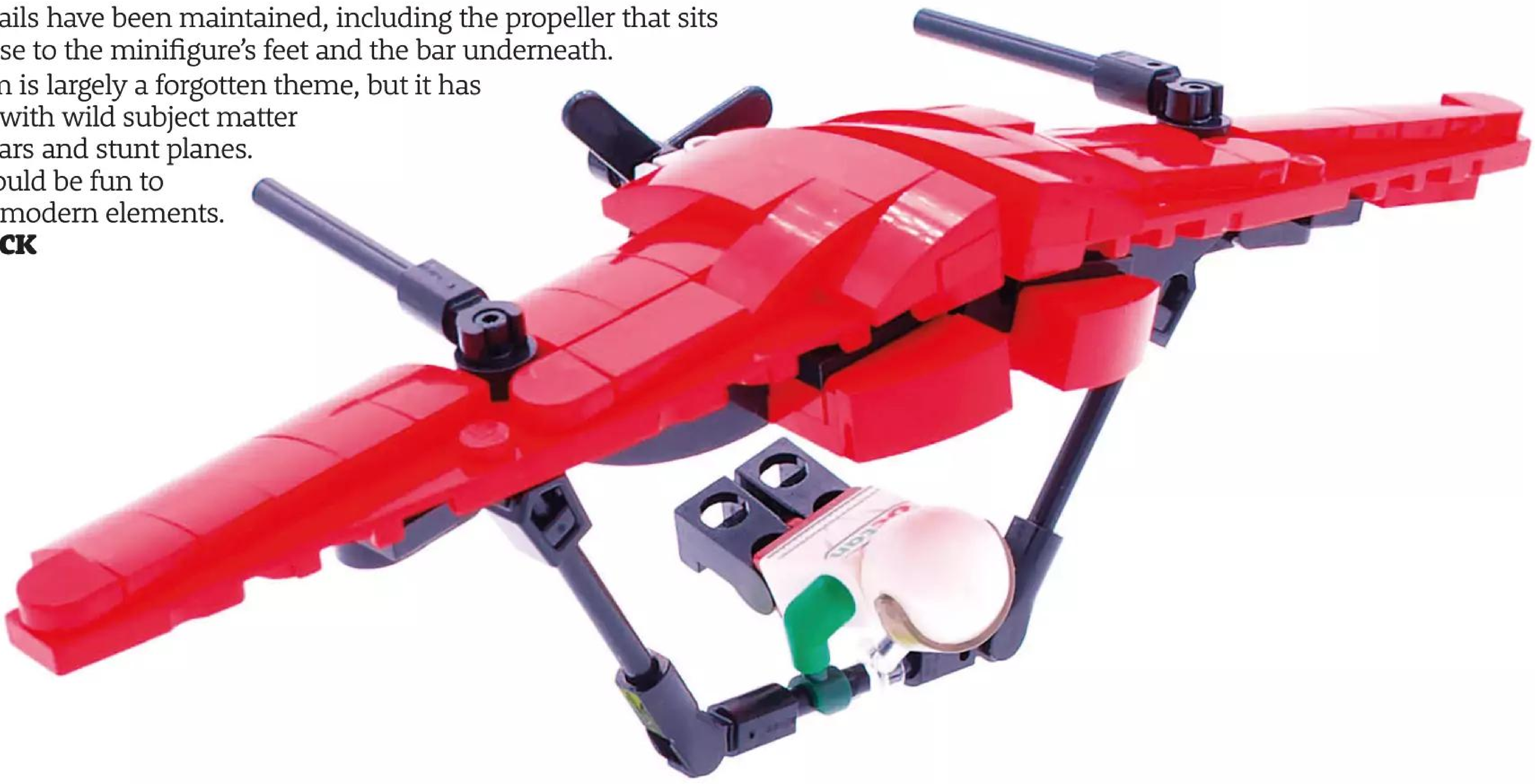
One of the LEGO Group's first experiments with tapping into the cultural zeitgeist was with Extreme Team in 1998. Despite the name, there wasn't a skateboard or dirt bike to be seen. Instead, a variety of vehicles allowed team members to race, fly and sail at high speeds. There were also calmer options, such as 6585 Hang-Glider.

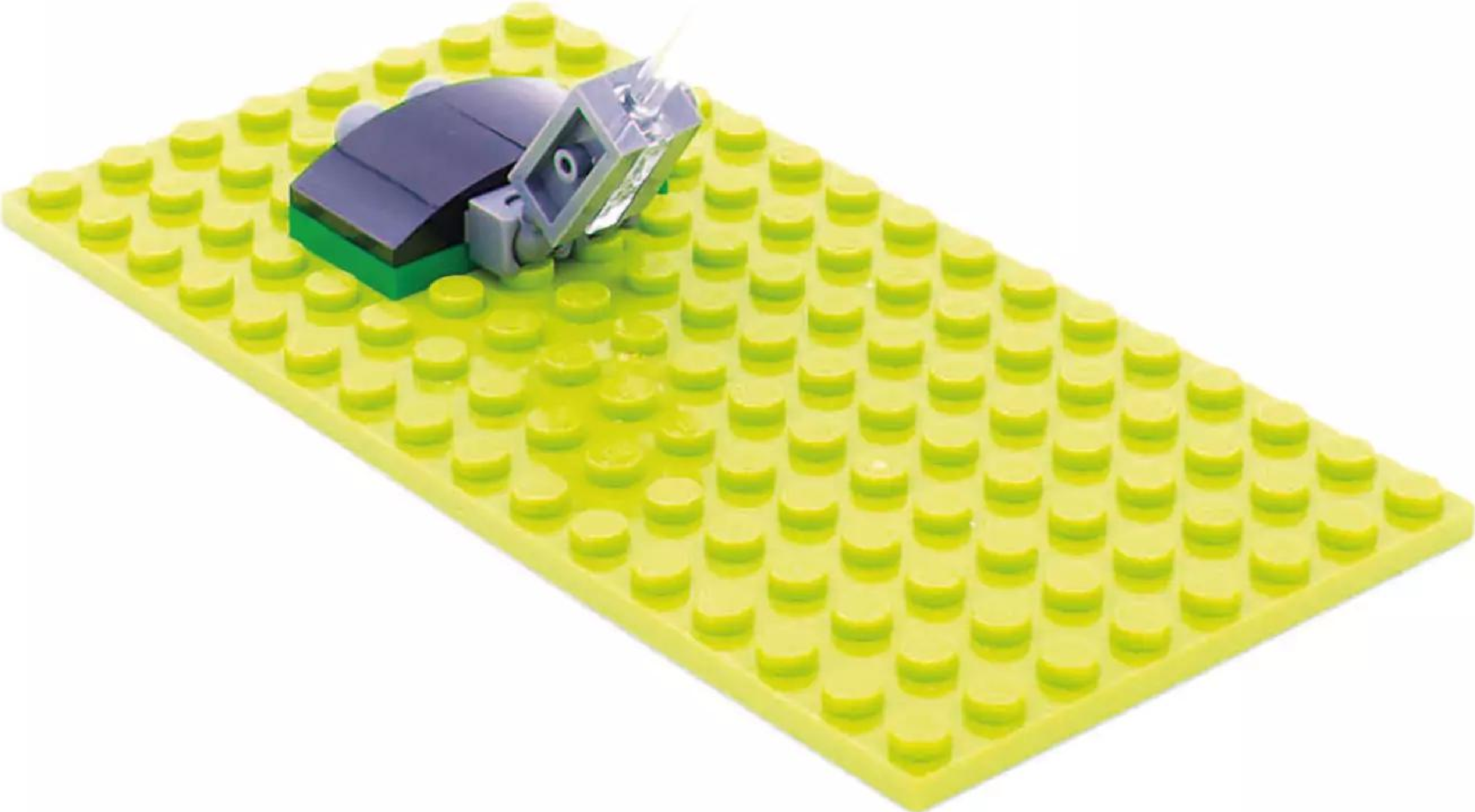
At the time of its release, the parts catalogue was much more limited. Unlike today, only a few wing shaped plates were available. Accordingly, this update is able to be much more detailed and dynamic thanks to a plethora of wedge plates and sloped curves available, which can give the glider some thickness that is more accurate to those found in the real world.

The other details have been maintained, including the propeller that sits dangerously close to the minifigure's feet and the bar underneath.

Extreme Team is largely a forgotten theme, but it has some cool sets, with wild subject matter such as rocket cars and stunt planes. Any of those would be fun to reimagine with modern elements.

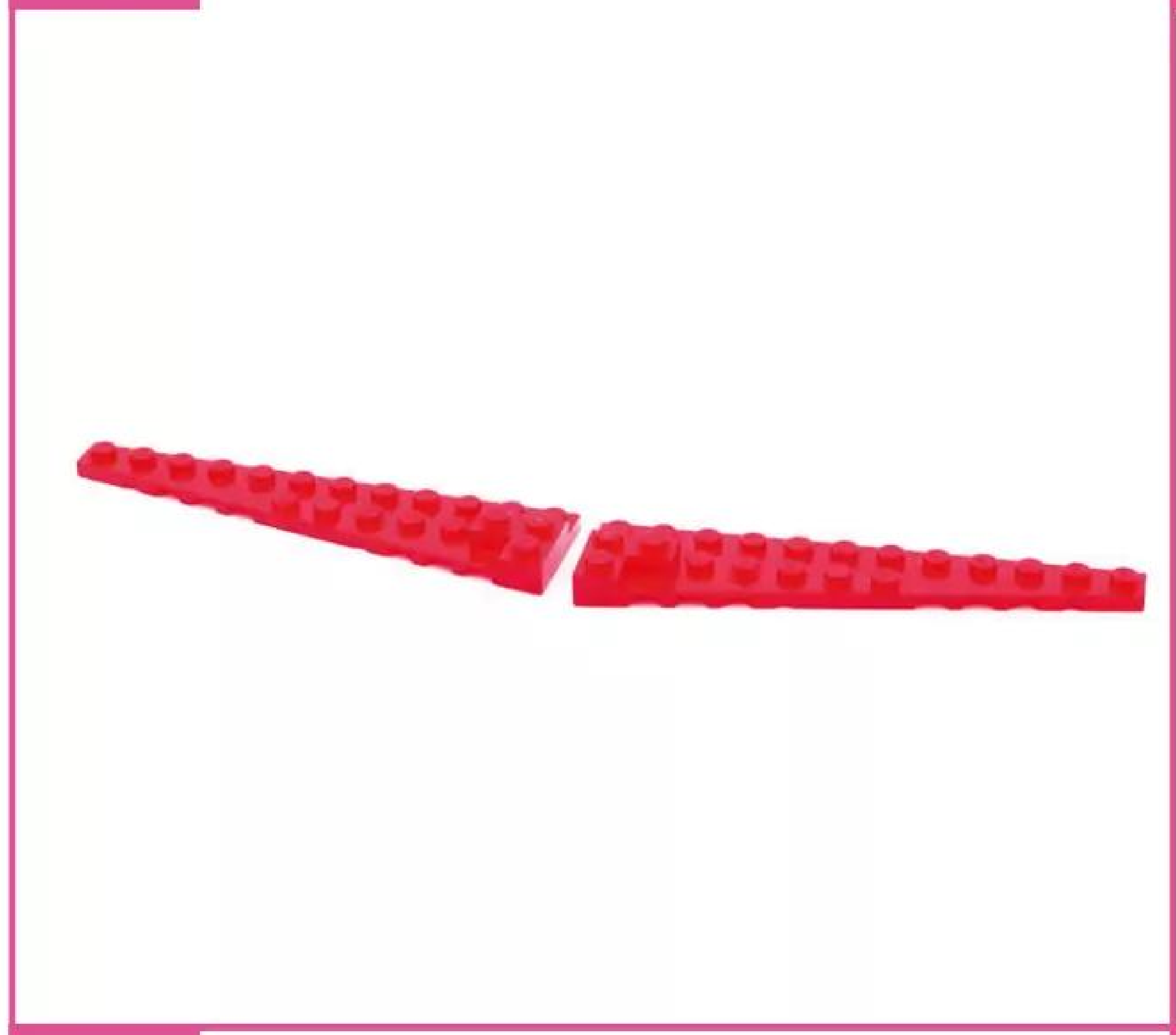
WILL TACHICK



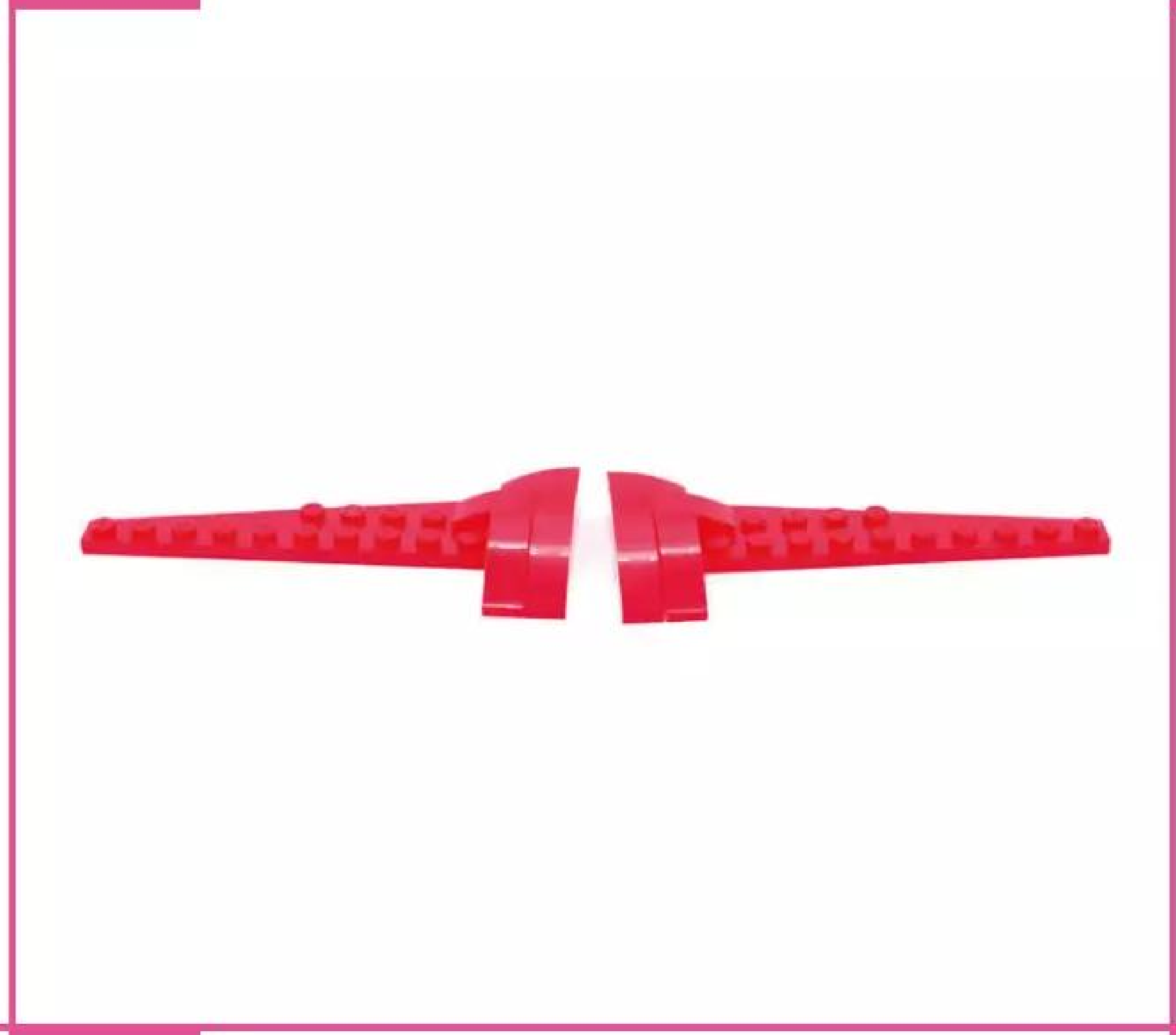


Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/glider

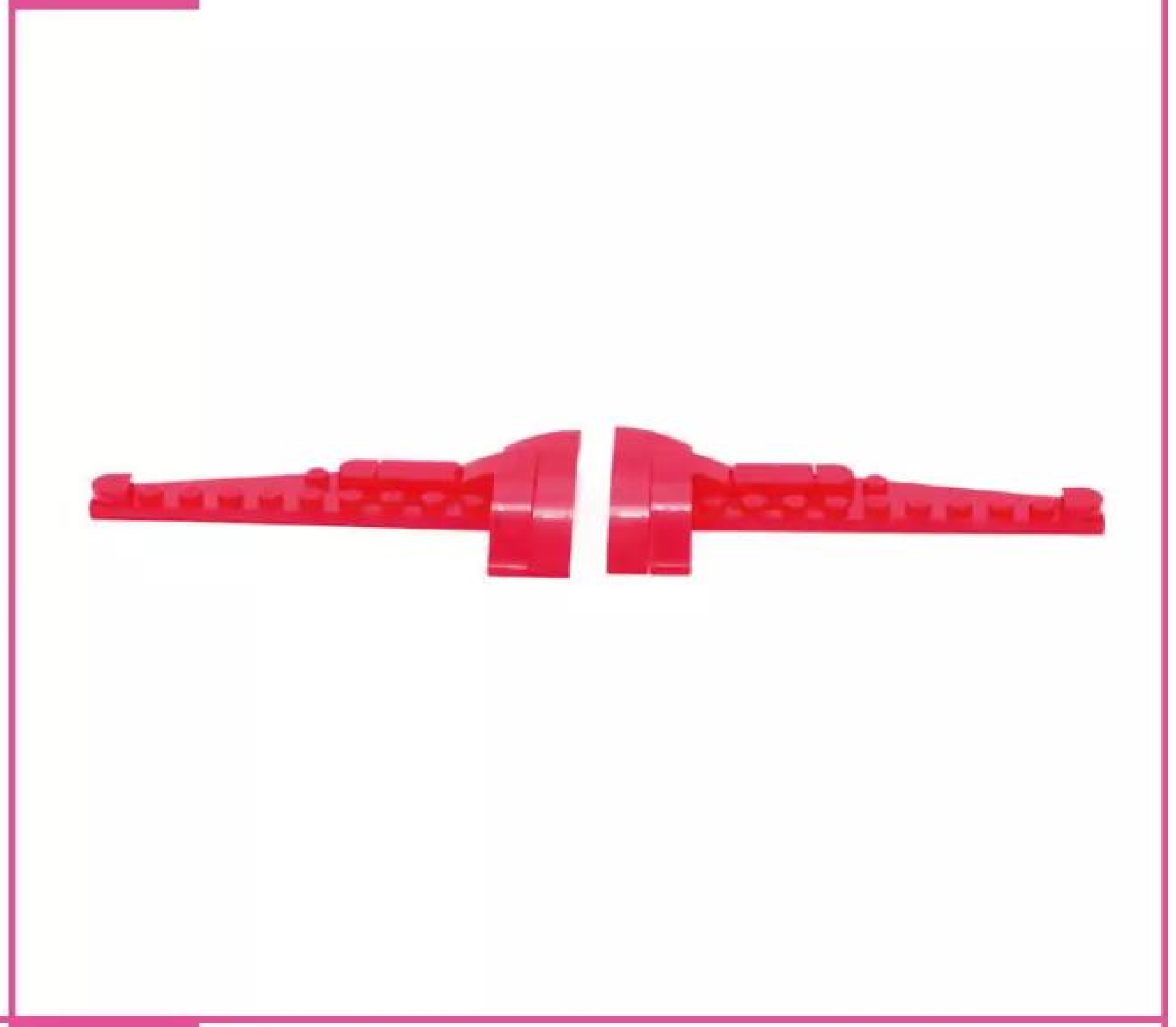
1



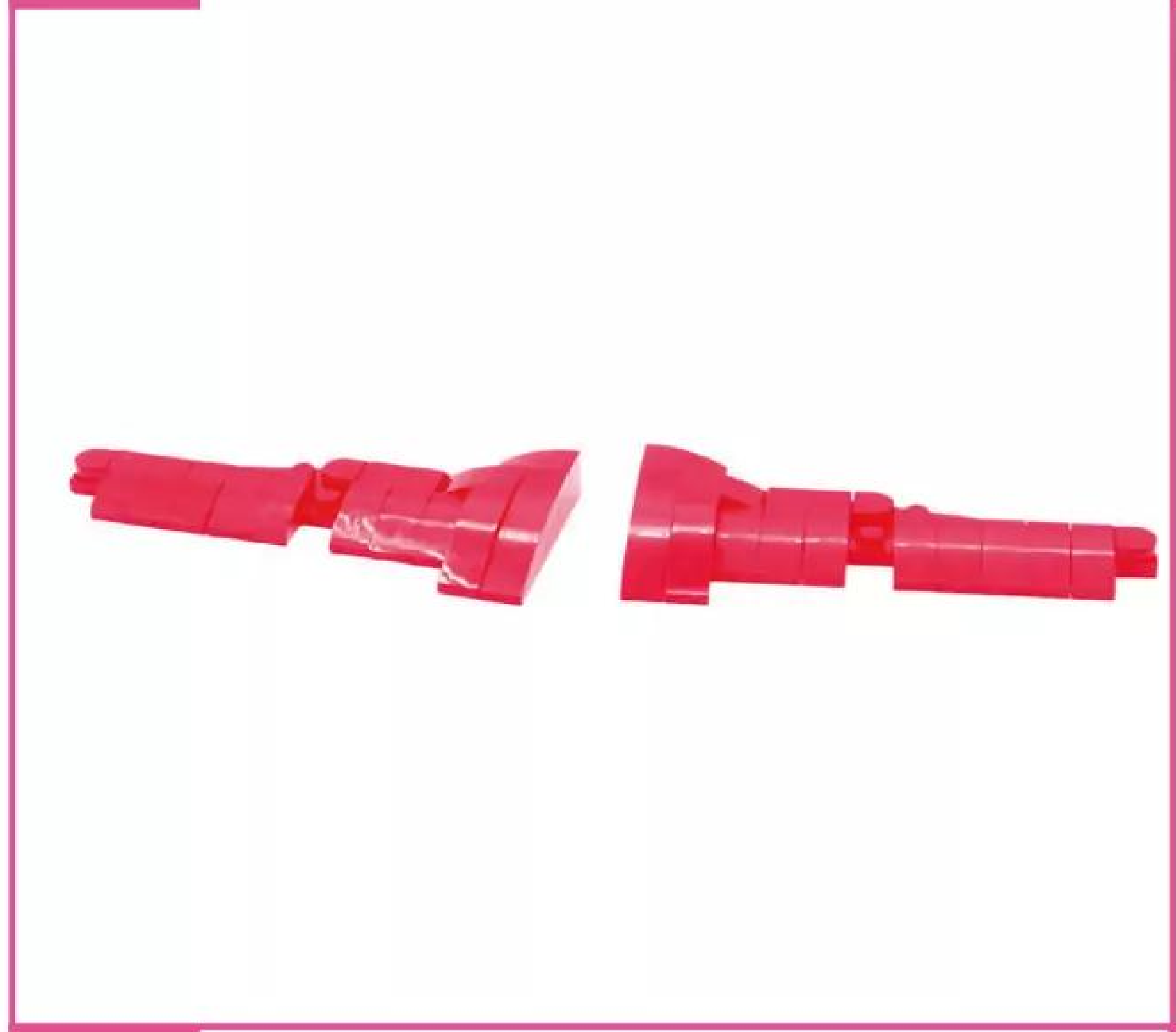
2



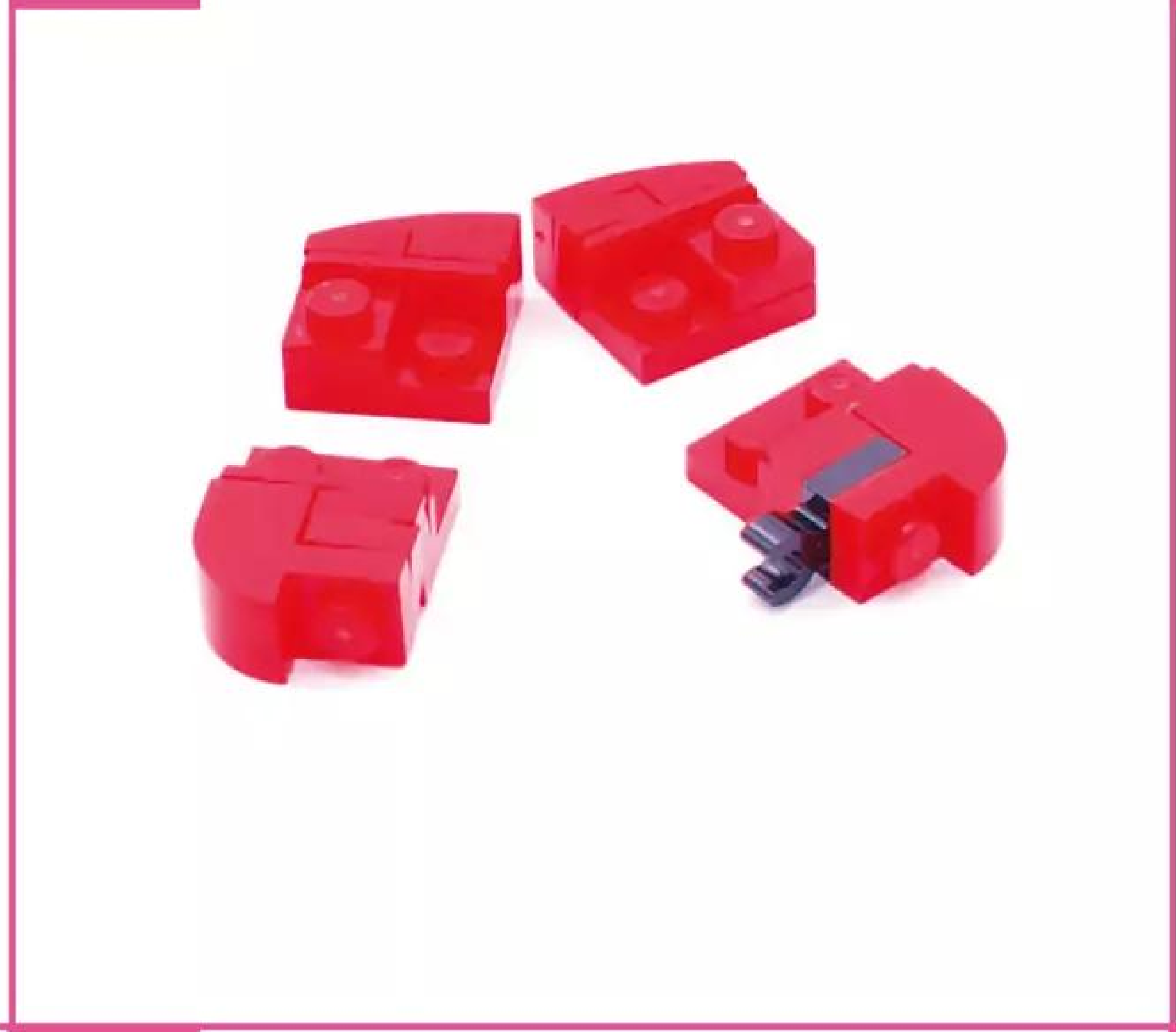
3



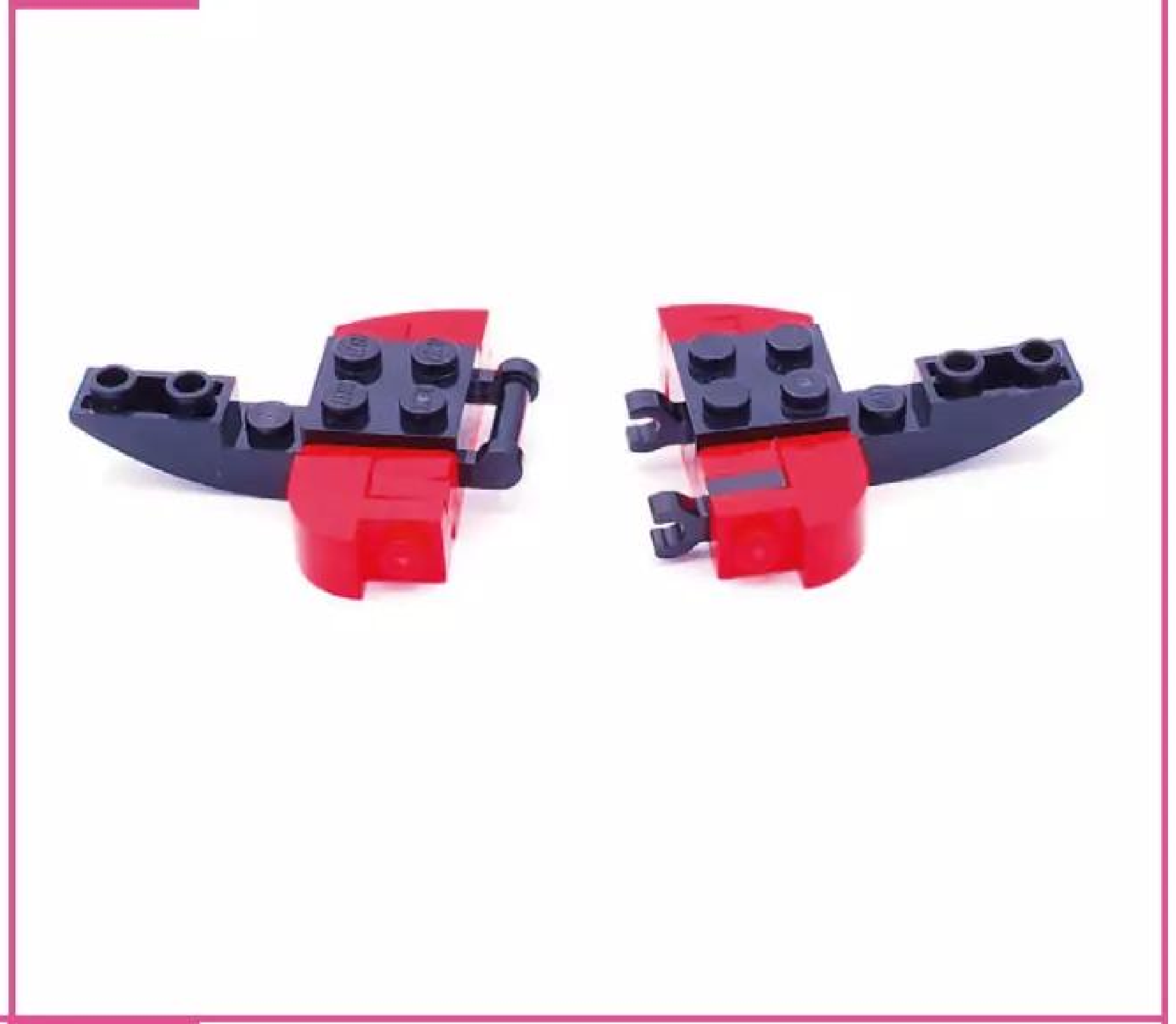
4



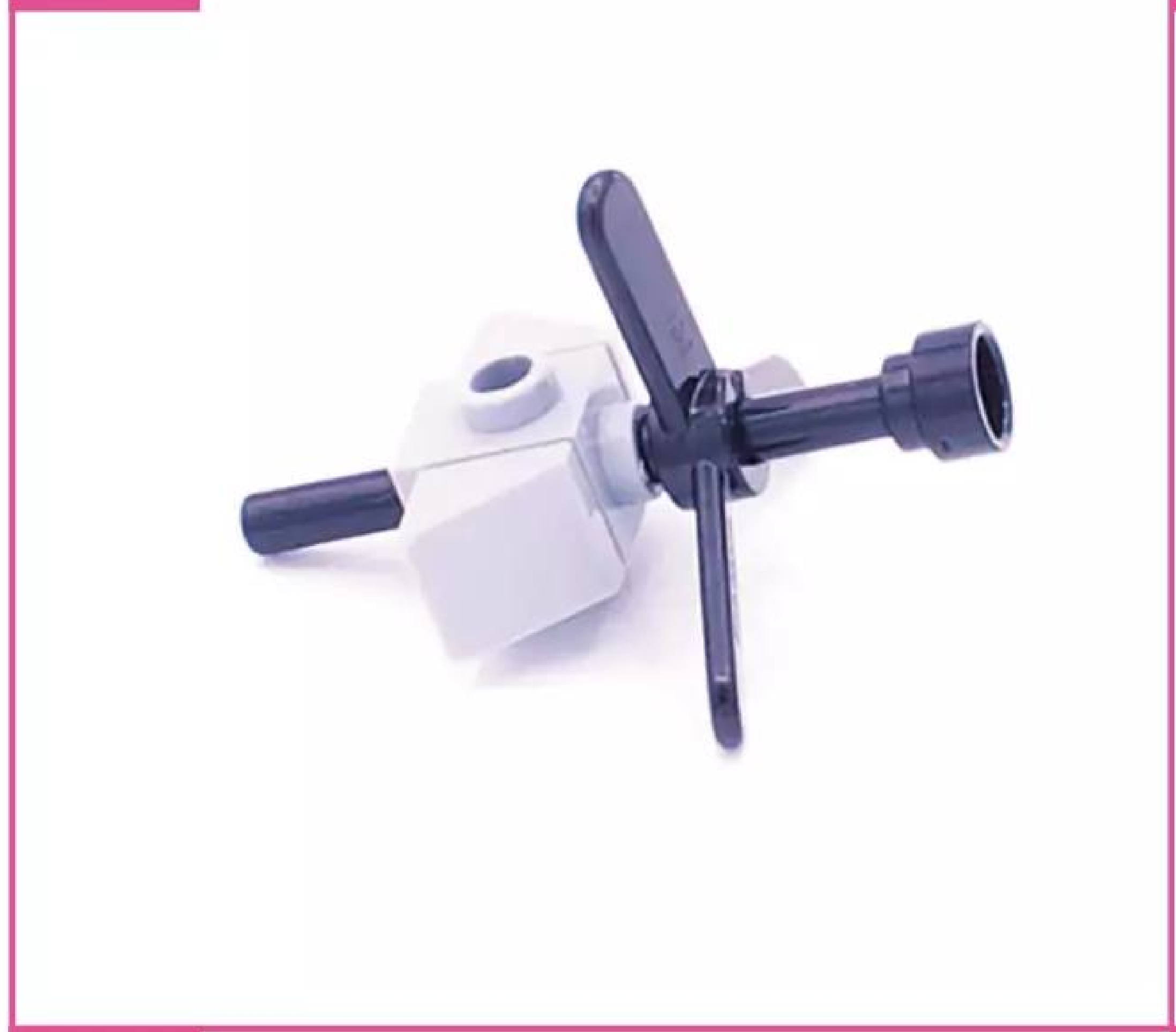
5



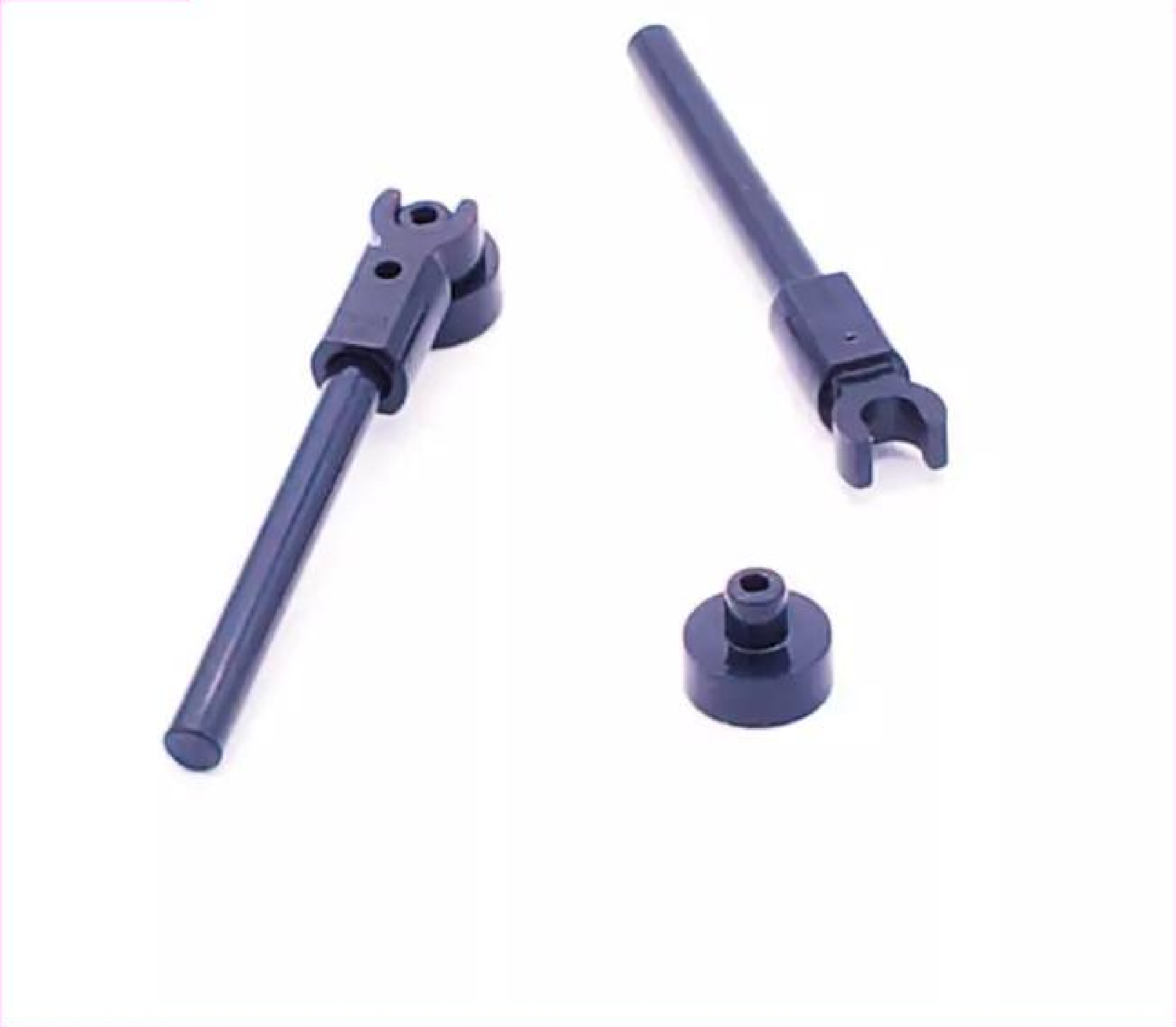
6



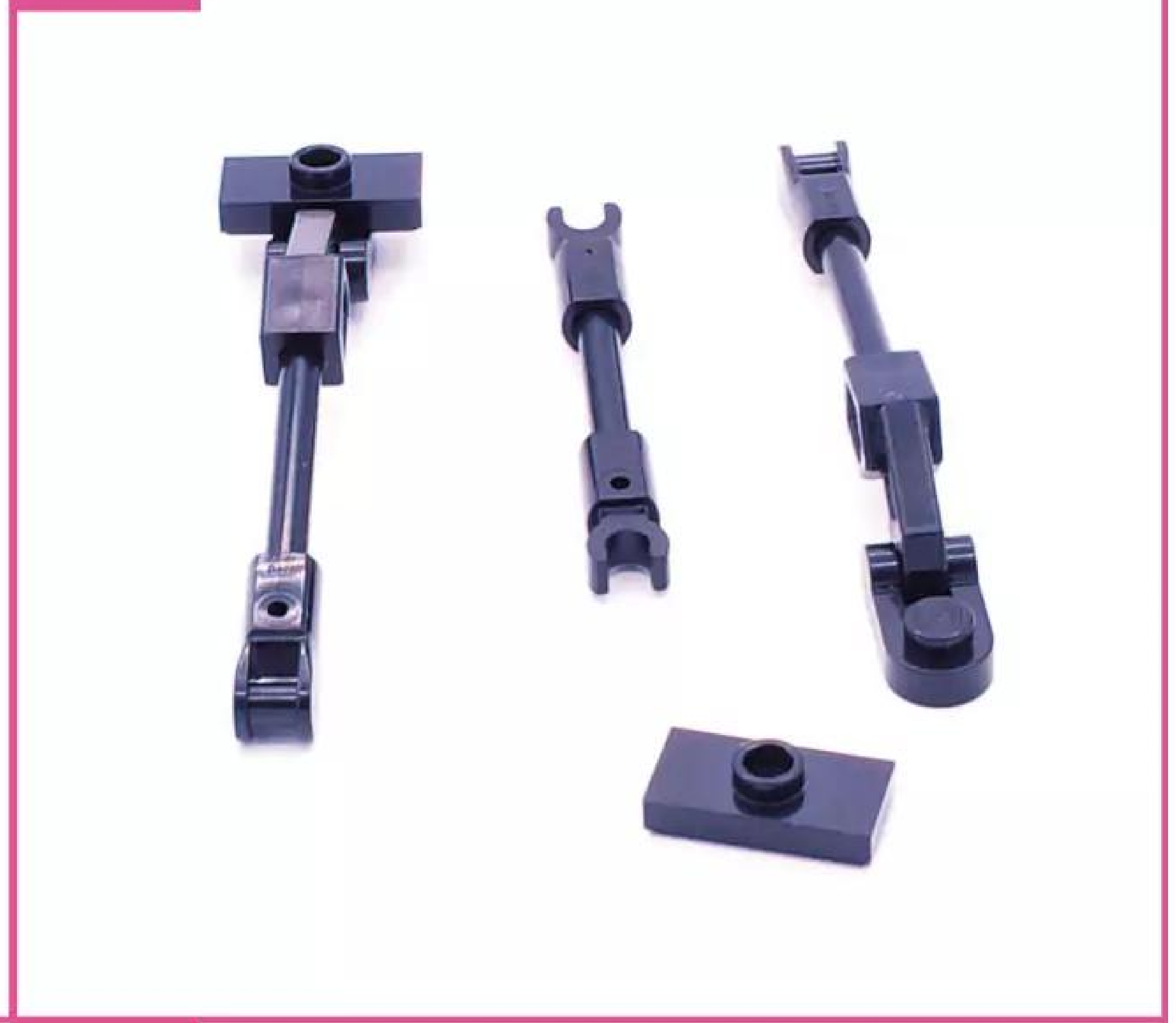
7



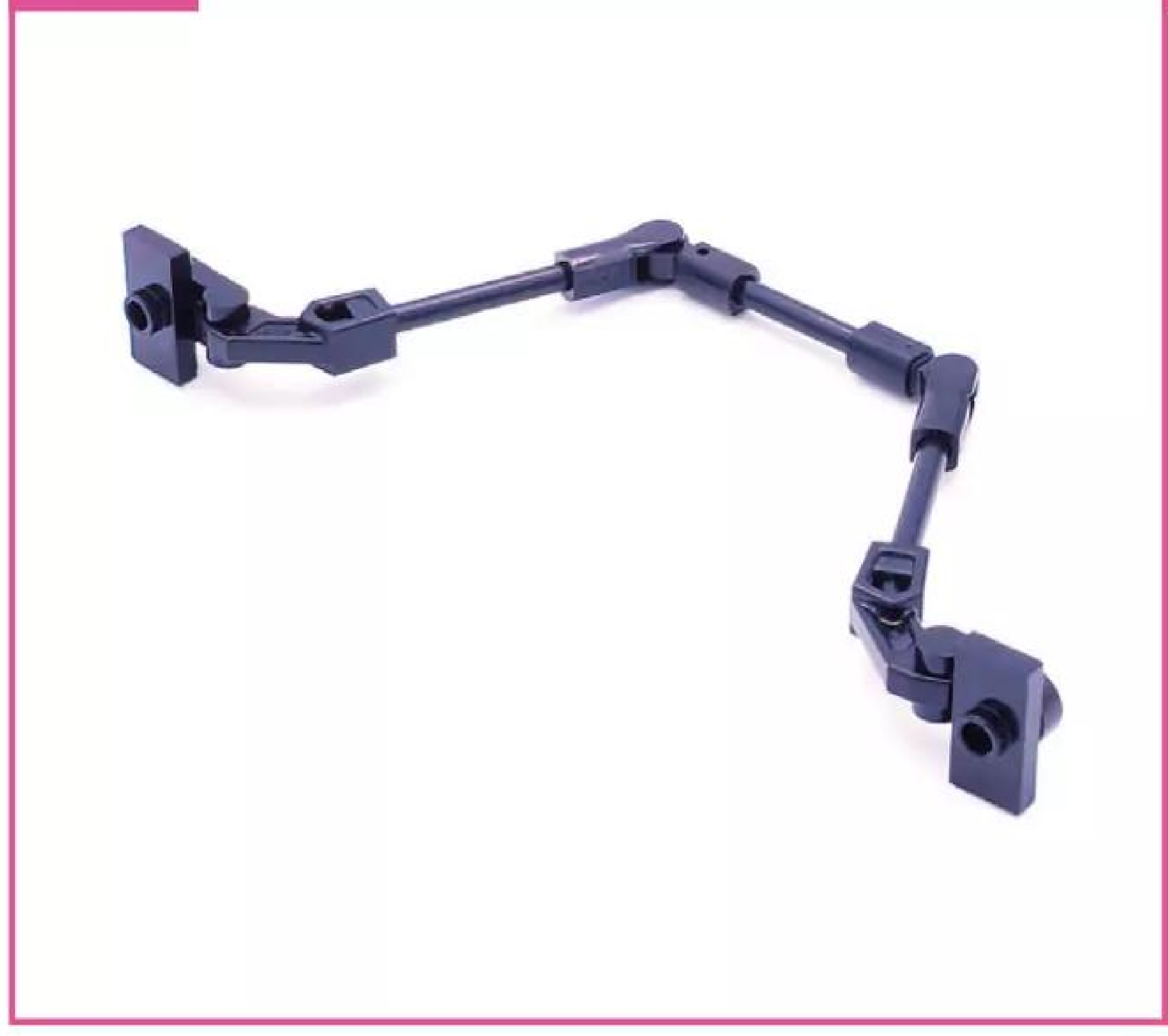
8



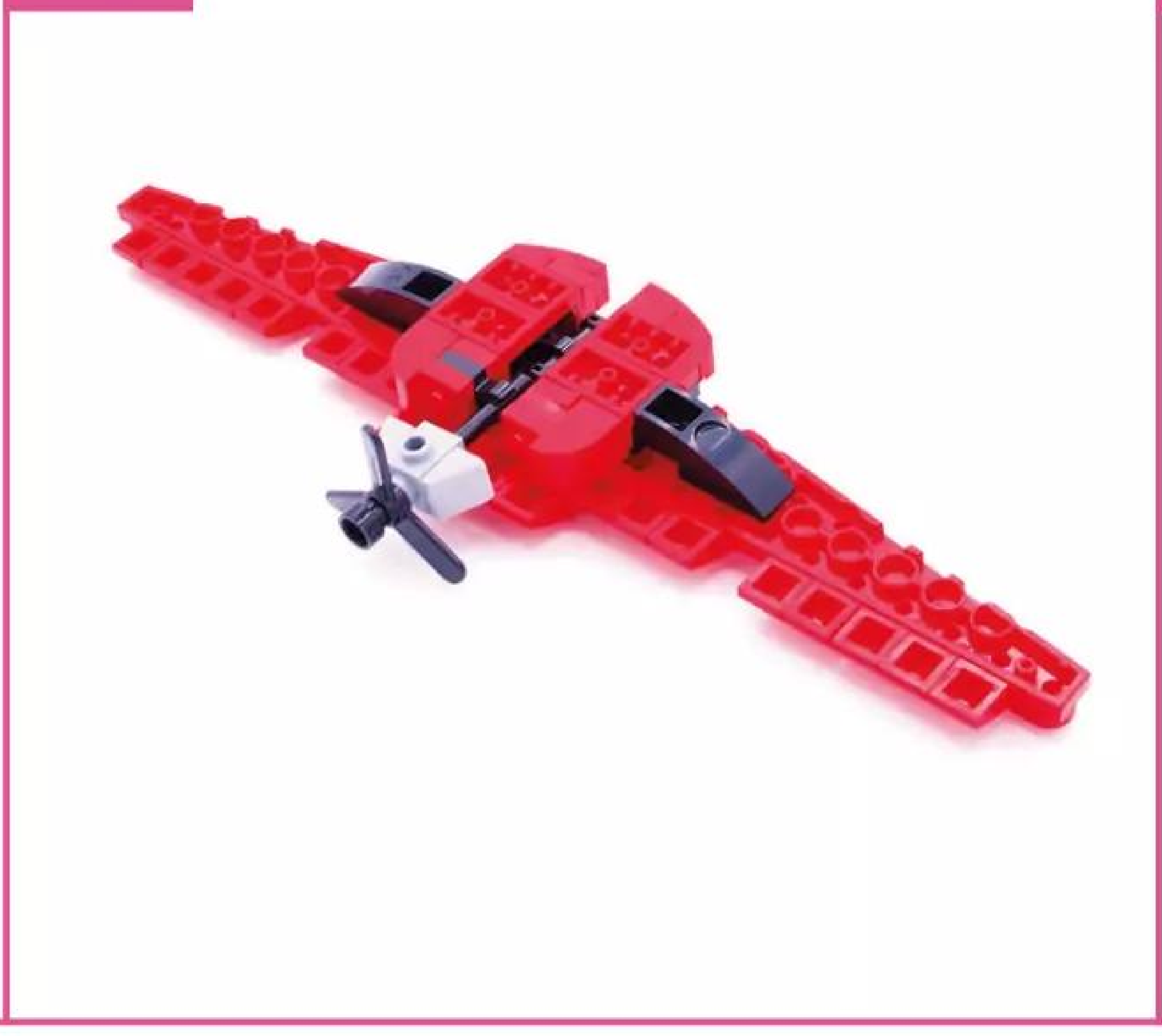
9



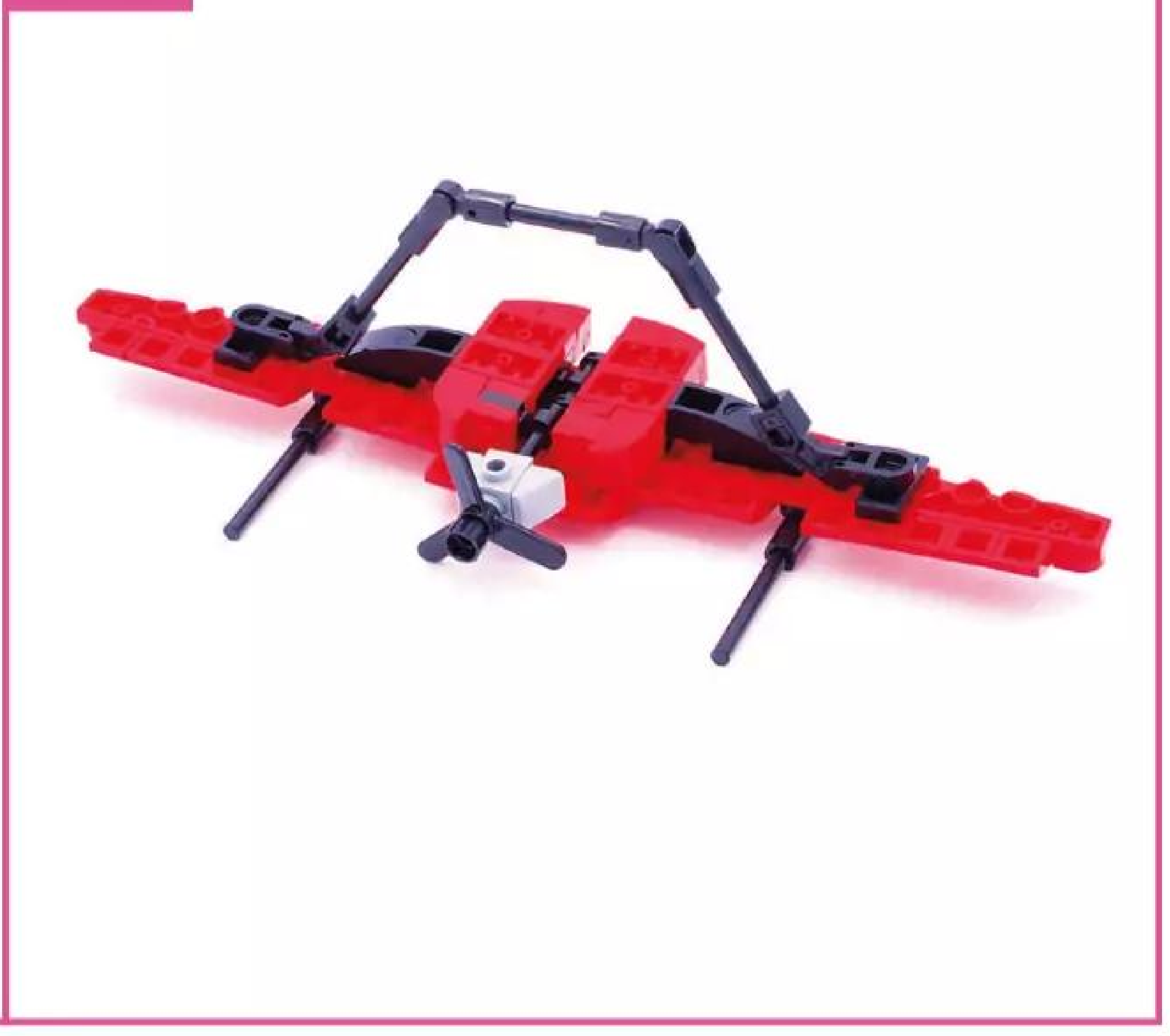
10



11



12



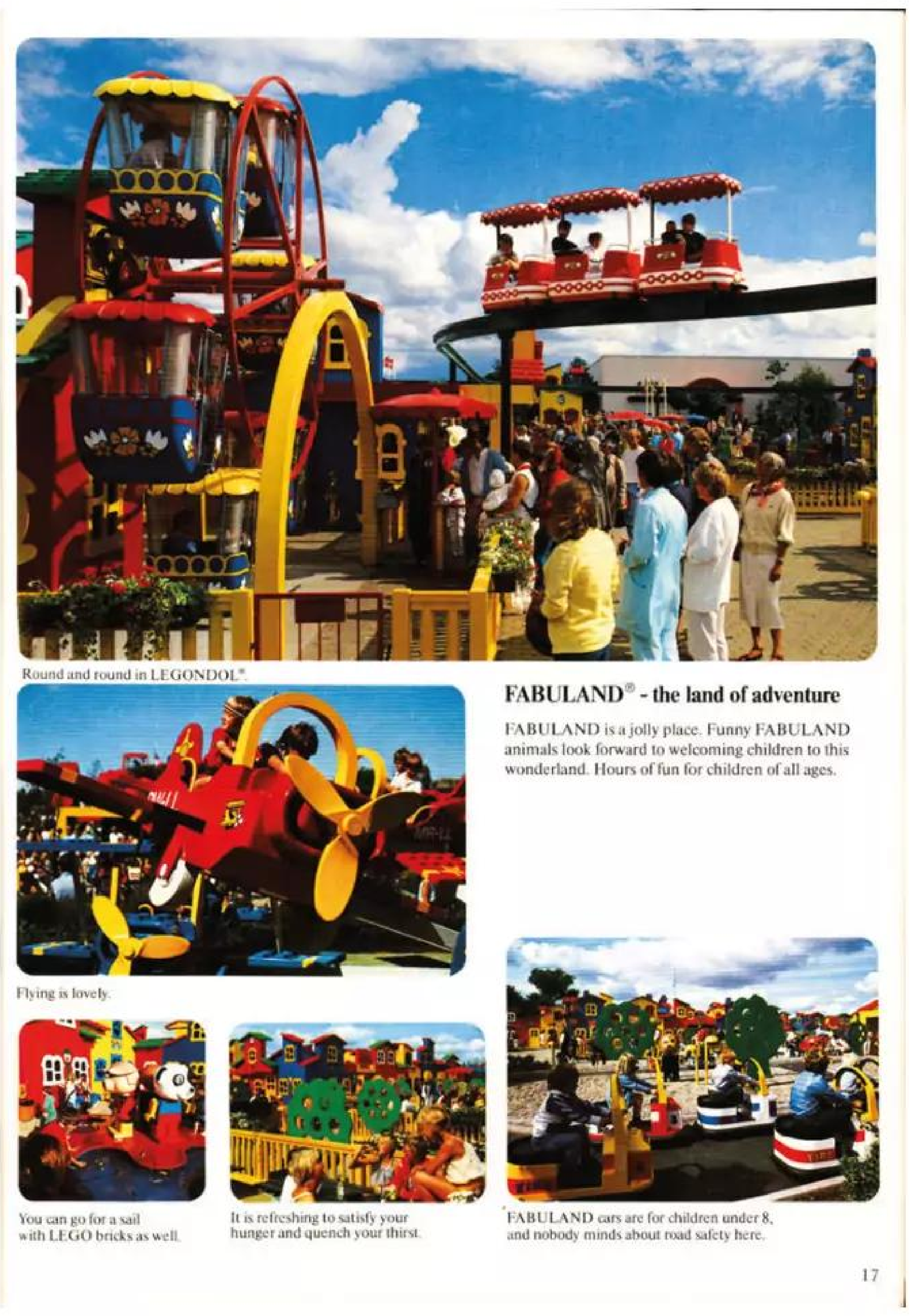
From the Vault

THE REAL FABULAND

Just a short walk from the LEGO Group's headquarters, children could wander the streets of a physical Fabuland

Right: Fabuland had lots of different attractions.

Below: A view of Fabuland Land in all its glory.



Round and round in LEGONDOL®.

FABULAND® - the land of adventure

FABULAND is a jolly place. Funny FABULAND animals look forward to welcoming children to this wonderland. Hours of fun for children of all ages.

Flying is lovely.

You can go for a sail with LEGO bricks as well.

It is refreshing to satisfy your hunger and quench your thirst.

FABULAND cars are for children under 8, and nobody minds about road safety here.

17

Fabuland was a long-running LEGO theme that delighted children with anthropomorphic animal characters throughout the 1980s. Those lucky enough to visit LEGOLAND Billund back then had a chance to live their best Fabuland life.

Constructed at what was then the back of the park, Fabuland took the theme's distinctive style, aesthetic and parts, then blew them up to human size. It wasn't just the buildings – the beloved cast of characters also got a major size increase so that children could stand next to their favourite for a photo.

Fabuland was several streets worth of buildings for children to explore while ducking in and out of umbrellas that were also designed to look like bigger versions of the ones found in Fabuland's sets.

Along with Miniland, Driving School and LEGOREDO, it comprised one of the park's four main lands, similar to the way that Disneyland is divided into distinct realms. In a further cue from Disney, a monorail snaked above Fabuland and Driving School, giving visitors the chance to look at all the delightful buildings from above. When it opened, the monorail was advertised as being the only one in Denmark.

Amidst the myriad buildings were a variety of rides and other attractions. Four different options were available to visitors at Fabuland's peak –the Fabuland Merry-Go-Round which was modelled after set 3663 Merry Go Round Carousel, right down to the distinctive red roof.

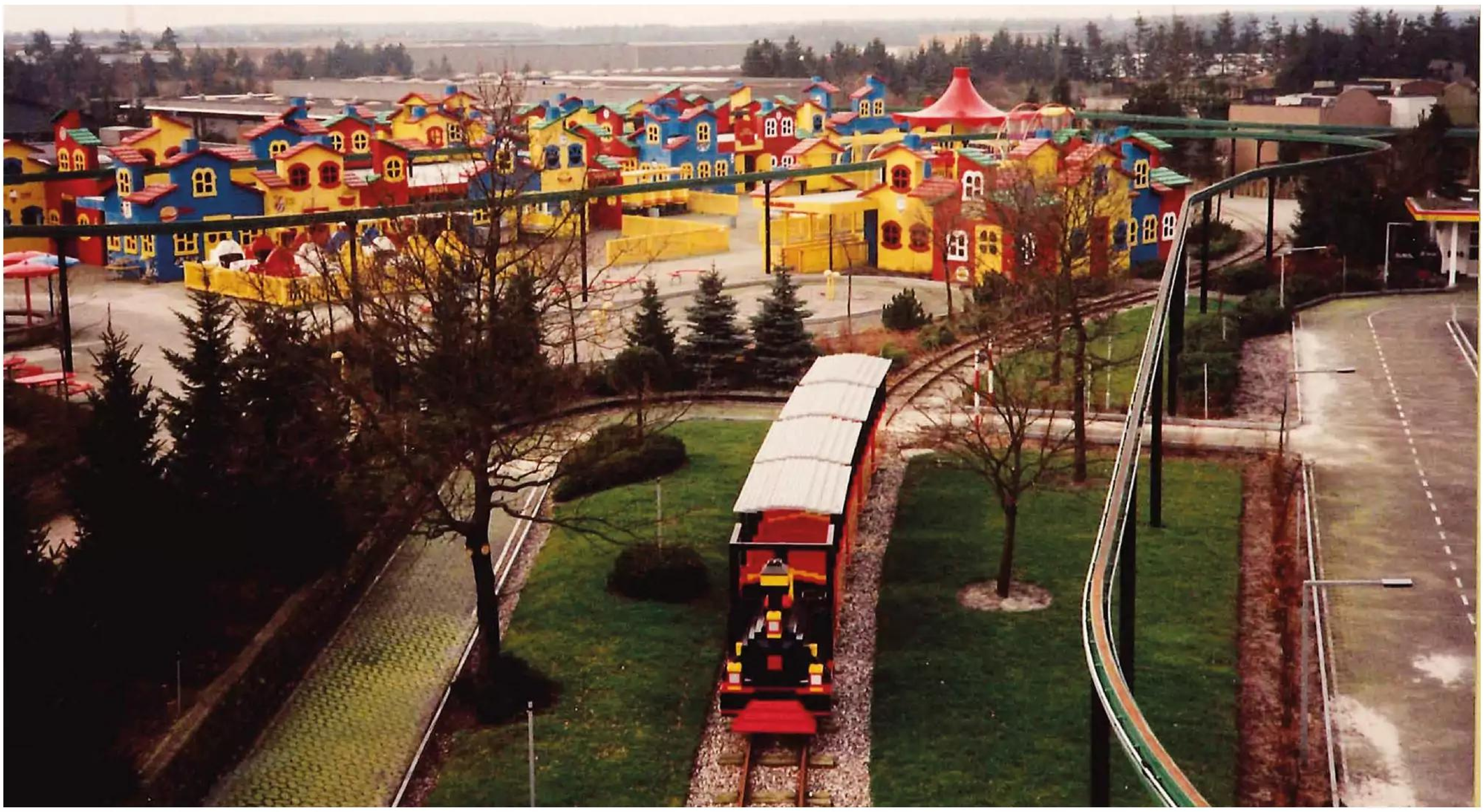
Fabuland Flight was a standard rotating ride with long arms attached to aeroplanes that went up and down. The appeal was that the planes were all different coloured versions of 3625 Aeroplane. LEGONDOL was a mini ferris wheel designed for smaller children.

Then there was Fabuland Cars. Driving School was already a major part of LEGOLAND, but it was designed for older children who could operate the fully autonomous vehicles. Fabuland's version was more contained, so it served as an alternative for those not quite developmentally ready for the larger version.

Amidst the larger offerings, there were smaller attractions too. An alphabet board with large bricks encouraged children to practice making words. In another corner, large versions of several characters watched over the Fabuland pond, where children could construct and sail LEGO boats.

It's not possible to wander the streets of Fabuland today, as this area of the park has been remodelled and repurposed several times over. It has largely been replaced by a NINJAGO themed area, although a small portion has been repurposed as a tiny Duplo themed playground.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Blocks

BRICKISH MAIL
HAPPY BIRTHDAY from Blocks
BUILDING, COLLECTING AND CUSTOMISING YOUR LEGO
Blocks
BUILDING, COLLECTING AND CUSTOMISING YOUR LEGO
Blocks

HE'S BACK! YOUR FAVOURITE POSTIE! GET YOURS NOW AT

BLOCKSMAG.COM

Blocks

LEGO® Parts and Minifigure Marketplace

Sponsored by Brick Owl

ICONIC BRICKS
ENGAGE, INSPIRE, BUILD

The UK's largest vintage LEGO® shop

www. iconicbricks.com

Brick Cycle

Buyer & Seller of new & used LEGO®

Over 400,000 parts currently in stock.

Fast dispatch, 1st class postage options available, instant checkout & competitive prices.

10% off all orders over £5 using code BLOCKS10

www.facebookcom/BrickCycle www.instagram.com/brick_cycle

NI BRICKS

Renowned for our fast dispatch and huge variety of stock, NI Bricks is your one stop shop to complete all your LEGO® builds and sets.

Blocks

Blocks Marketplace, Where to find that missing set or brick you have been looking for.

If you would like to advertise, email ads@blocksmag.com

Blocks

Take out a LEGO® magazine subscription with Blocks, the ultimate monthly title for LEGO® fans, to get a great deal. You'll save money compared to buying the issues individually.

DSLS BRICKS

Check out my Brick Owl store
DSLS Bricks, many new and used parts, minifigures and sets in stock.
Much more available,
email Dslsbricks@gmail.com for more info
Instagram/Facebook - @dslsbricks
10% off with code: Blocks in our store

bricks for the memories

Helping you create your brick memories

We stock new and used items, aiming to provide you with quality Parts, Minifigures and Sets at a good price.
Use code BLOCKS10 for 10% off

BRICKNATION TOYS
LEGO® PARTS | SETS | MINIFIGURES

Family business trusted by builders worldwide
vast selection | fast processing | quality service
1.7 million parts in stock in over 100 colours
Free UK shipping on orders over £50
Build Summer Fun with code BLOCKS10 (10% Off)
scan to shop now at bricknation.brickowl.com

www.brickowl.com

LEGO®, the LEGO® logo are trademarks of The LEGO® Group, which is not associated with Brick Owl

If you would like to advertise your business on the Marketplace, please email ads@blocksmag.com

Blocks LEGO® Marketplace

BRICKNATION TOYS
LEGO® PARTS | SETS | MINIFIGURES

Family business trusted by builders worldwide
vast selection | fast processing | quality service
1.7 million parts in stock in over 100 colours
Free UK shipping on orders over £50
Build Summer Fun with code BLOCKS10 (10% Off)
scan to shop now at bricknation.brickowl.com

Blocks

Take out a LEGO® magazine subscription with Blocks, the ultimate monthly title for LEGO® fans, to get a great deal. You'll save money compared to buying the issues individually.

YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Follow the Yellow Brick Road whether you're building, collecting, or creating, we've got the pieces you need, shipped world wide from OZ.

yellowbrickroadlego.brickowl.com

BricKing.co.uk

We are passionate about Lego® and believe that every brick tells a story. Our mission is to provide Lego® enthusiasts with a selection of new and retired Lego® sets.
You will also find us at National Brick Events.
for more info email
info@bricking.co.uk
Instagram - @Bricking01
Facebook - @BrickKing

BILL'S BRICKS
FOR ALL YOUR LEGO NEEDS

Check out my store for a large selection of new pieces & minifigures.

Quote 'Blocks' for a 5% discount.

LEGO® Star Wars Jedi Bob / Darth Jar Jar huge double-sided A1 limited edition poster

---

BRICKZ KINGDOM
BUY
SELL
TRADE

New / preloved / retired Lego sets
Brickz kingdom
41 high street
Lincoln LN5 8AS

ECCENTRIC BRICKS

Thousands of brand new parts,
Swift order processing,
Eco-conscious packaging,
Shipped from Edinburgh
direct to you!

TONEIL BRICKS
RARE AND RETIRED SETS FOR GREAT PRICES!

We sell mainly new, retired sets, and our main USP is extremely competitive prices. We have a huge inventory on bricklink of over 900 different sets, and also sell at brick shows regularly around the UK.

BRICKTASTICUK

BRICKTASTICUK
Purveyors of new and used lego
Worldwide shipping
Over 1.4million parts available

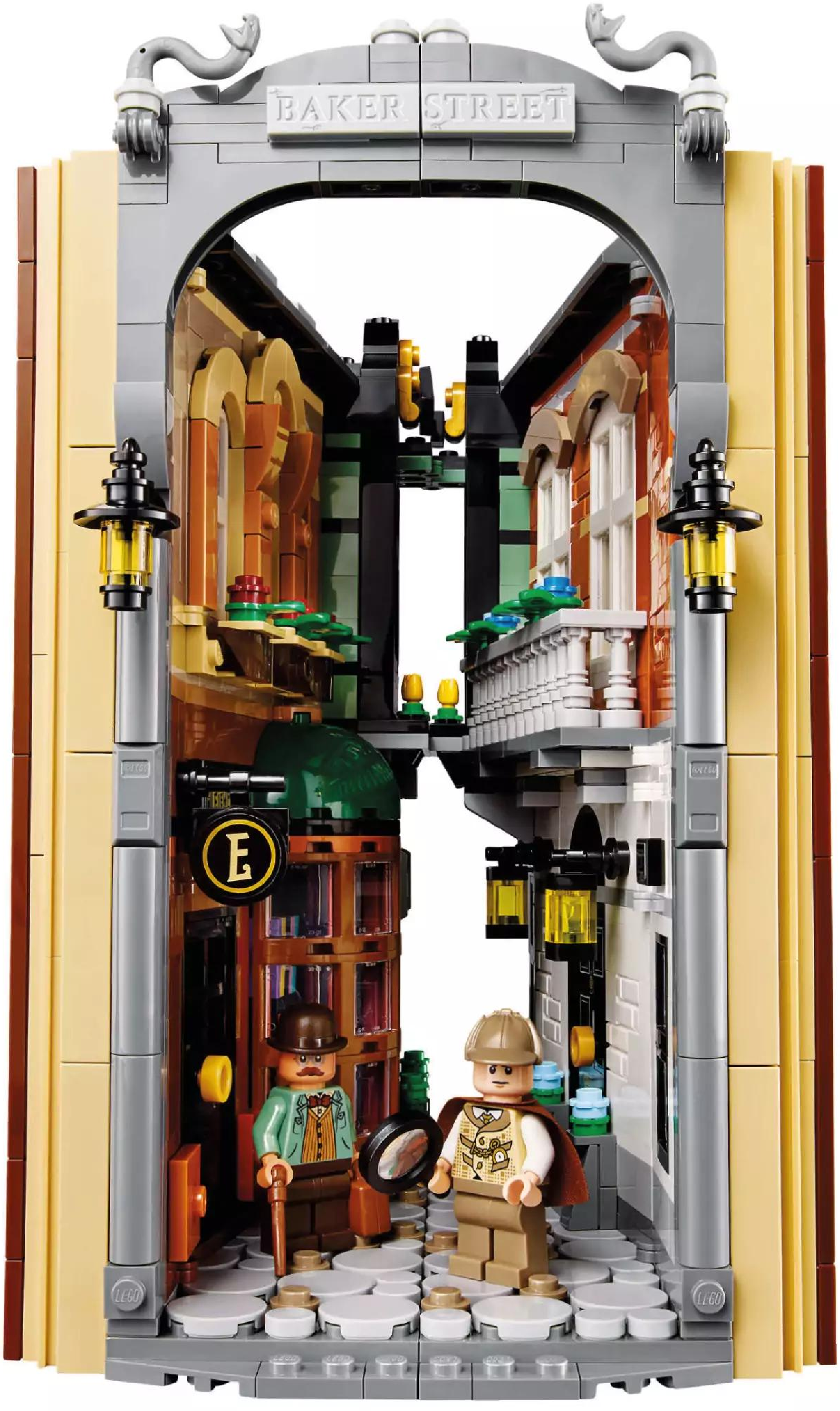
Hi my name is Angela the owner of
Technictaylorbricks
Our family started collecting in 2012 as a hobby but it got a bit out of hand so we set up our shop of new and used Lego

LEGO, the LEGO logo are trademarks of The LEGO Group of companies which is not associated with Blocks

If you would like to advertise your business on the Marketplace, please email ads@blocksmag.com

NEXT MONTH

IN SHOPS JULY 4



IT'S ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON

Pull out the magnifying glass for a deep dive into the new Sherlock Holmes book nook

Also including...

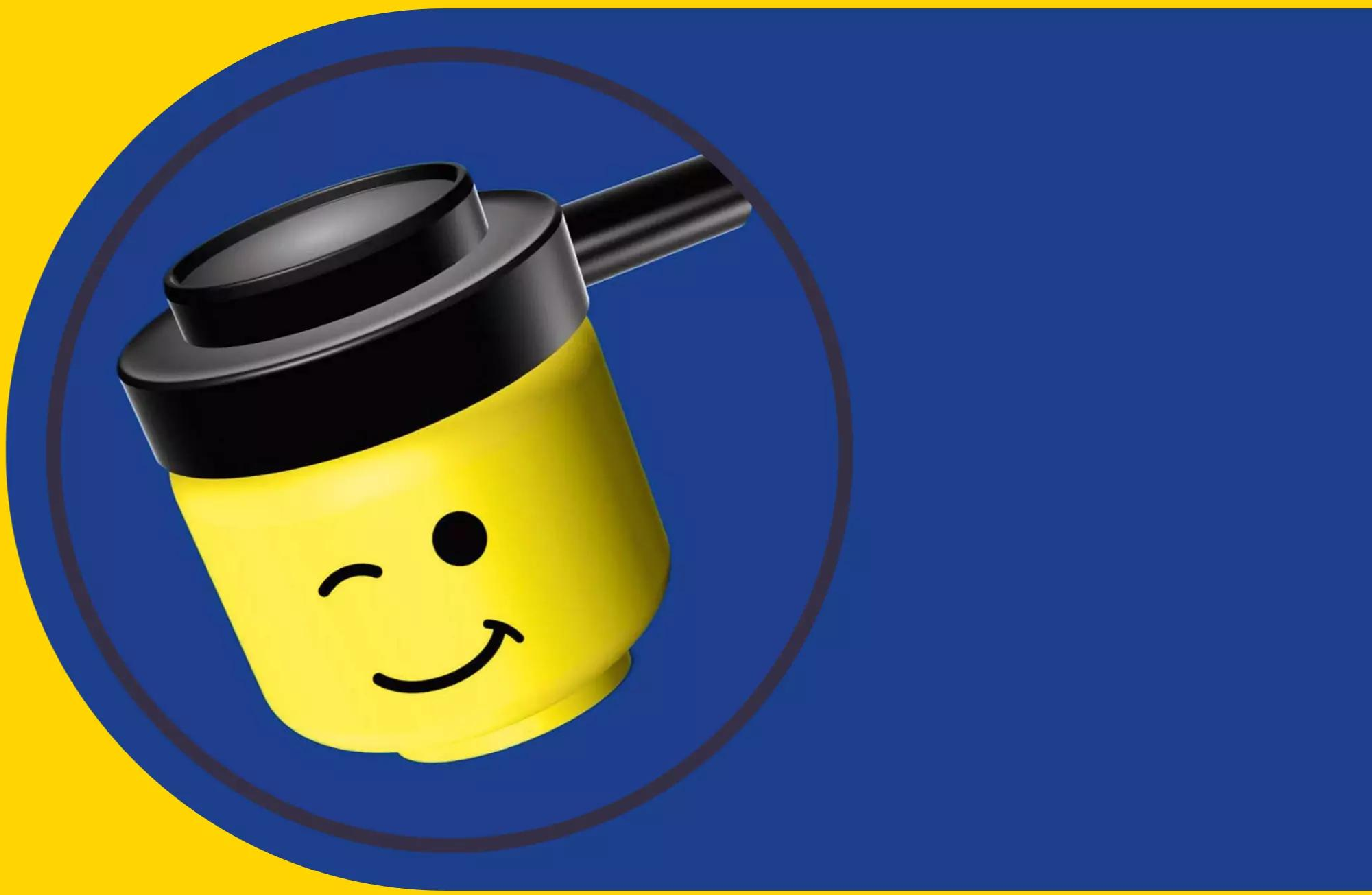
STAR WARS INTERVIEW ● **JURASSIC WORLD** REVIEWS

NexoToys.Com

NexoToys

NexoToys is your one-stop destination for all things minifig. With an incredible range of high-quality, custom parts and accessories, you can transform your minifigs and bring your creations to life. From unique armor pieces to detailed weaponry, we've got it all. Whether you're a seasoned builder or just starting out, NexoToys has something for everyone.

NexoToys – Where Imagination Meets Innovation.



10% off your next order

CODE: BLOCKS10

WWW.MINIFIGS.ME

CUSTOM & PERSONALISED MINIFIGS

LEGO® is a trademark of the LEGO Groups of companies. The LEGO Group does not sponsor, authorise or endorse this website nor any of the customised/modified products or sets shown on it nor does it accept responsibility in any way, shape or form for any unforeseen and/or adverse consequences following from such customisation/modification.

09:50
minifigs.me
days to process your order in the workshop BEFORE shipping. Learn about shipping here.
Cart
CREATE YOUR OWN
UNIQUE MINIFIG
Choose a skin tone
Name your project
Start building
OUR MINIFIGS
MINIBUILDS
Con-Graduations!
PARTY TIME
CERTIFIED LEGEND

START CREATING!

USE CODE **JUNE10** FOR 10% OFF YOUR NEXT ORDER

MINI FIGS.ME

WWW.MINIFIGS.ME